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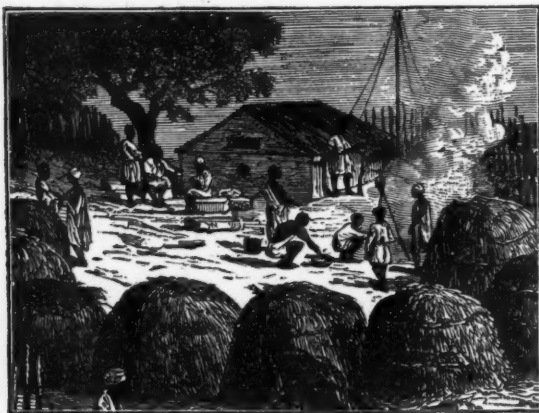
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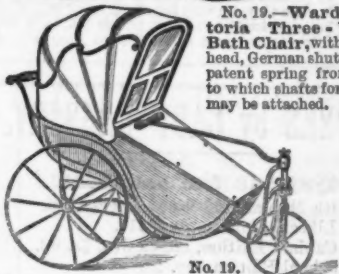
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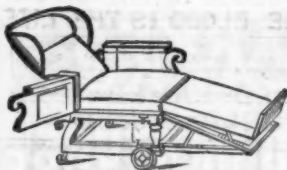
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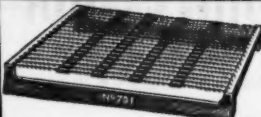
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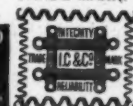
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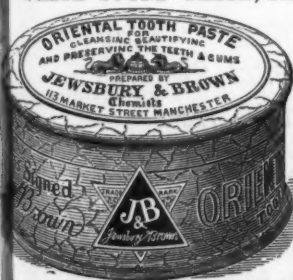
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# LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

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NOVEMBER 1886.

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## *Children of Gibeon.*

BY WALTER BESANT.

BOOK II.

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

RETURN, O SHULAMITE!

SO, at last, dawned the morning of Valentine's last day in Hoxton—the last day comes, if one waits long enough, of everything.

Her last day. She awoke before daybreak, and watched how the dawn—a pretty sight—gradually revealed in all their beauty, the Board School and the back yards and the courts commanded by her window. There were no larks singing in the sky or swallows flying about the eaves to welcome the sun, perhaps because the season was too late for larks and swallows; nor was there any autumnal splendour of wood and coppice for the sun to shine upon and to glorify; but there were cats and there were sparrows—and gradually there arose a murmur of life, and dirty blinds were pulled up or pinned up, and the mortals behind them got themselves dressed in their work-a-day clothes, and the day's labours began. For most of them such dreary, weary, monotonous, and unprofitable labours!

Her last day. She looked round the little cell where she had spent three long summer months, a willing prisoner—and now she loved the place. On her bed lay the sick girl, who had taken so

many nights' rest from her. When first she came there was no sick girl to care for, nor had she any single friend—who now had so many—in the whole place. There were her household gods—all the things which Claude had given her for what she thought would be a three months' picnic, but proved to be the prelude to a lifelong work—they were no longer new; the frying-pan, never very strong—man, mere man, cannot know how to choose a frying-pan—was now battered out of shape; it had fried quantities of chops, steaks, eggs, kidneys, and bacon. The sauce-pan and the kettle, both showed—because they had boiled with enthusiasm—the black and respectable garb of labour. The first freshness was gone from the colour of her rugs and curtains. The mignonette in the window-box, which had been all the summer so great a solace to her, was now reduced to three scentless stalks. The summer was over, and the air, when she opened the window, blew fresh and cold; and as for her face, as she looked in the glass and wondered what Violet would say, it seemed to have grown longer, though that could hardly be, and graver. In the past three months how much had she learned and how much had she seen?

Her last day! She was going home—to the real home; in what Sam called the camp of those who are the natural enemies of the working-classes, where no one has to work, and the days flow on in idlesse all; where there is abundance, where there is music, where there is Art, and where there is the magic of poetry; where the girls are wrapped in soft silks, and kept from hearing how the workwomen cry aloud and cry in vain, and how they suffer in patience, hand in hand, with no one to help them or to care whether they live or die. But their cry, and the memory of their sufferings, would never leave her. She knew that she could no longer remain in that camp; she must come back again! She must return to the world where the women suffer. Everybody who once visits that world must go back to it. Those who work in it never want to leave it. Only three months ago: why—Claude was then her brother; what was he now? How could they go on working together when he should find out the truth? Three months ago they were both children of an honest workman, dead long since, and now Claude's father was not dead at all, but a shameful, horrible, living creature, who was going to bring misery upon all of them unless she could keep him silent and obscure. That silence, at any cost, she would procure and pay for—Claude must never know or suspect, and Violet must never know or suspect.

She would come back again, not as a visitor, but to live. That was now her firm resolve. She was as bent upon it as a novice is bent on taking the vows. But she would no longer live in her single chamber. That was not necessary. Enough for three months to have been housemaid, cook, parlourmaid, and lady's-maid all in one; enough for honour to have carried water upstairs, swept her own room, cooked her own dinner, boiled the kettle, made the bed, and cleaned the window. In one respect only she differed from the old woman below her—that she put out her washing. Now the old woman never had any to put out. For the greater part of the time her bed had been occupied by a girl in a consumption, so that she had to sleep as she could, on a chair, or a bed made up of three chairs. One must be a Moravian missionary before one can contemplate without a shudder a continuance of this way of life. She was coming back, but it would be to a home of her own, where she could live somewhat more as she was accustomed to live. Her house should be in Hoxton—she was resolved upon that, but it would not be quite in the midst of those who habitually get drunk on Saturday nights, and commonly use coarse imprecations, and when in liquor knock down and kick their wives. Even the Fellows of Toynbee Hall do not actually live in the very courts and lanes of the Whitechapel Road and Commercial Street. No doubt they will do so when, by their efforts, these courts have become Courts of the Great King; at present they seclude themselves in their College, each man with his own room æsthetically furnished for the pleasure of his soul, and removed somewhat from noise and stress and struggle of the common life. We may, in fact, give ourselves up, 'like anything,' for our fellow creatures, who will very likely give up nothing, not even a humble little vice or two, in return; but there are some hours in the day which should be kept apart and consecrated, even by the most thorough Renunciator, for the recreation and refreshment of his soul. All the monks, hermits, and recluses on record made the great mistake that they did not provide such hours of rest. The gain, for example, in the way of spiritual elevation would have been inestimable if the Holy Fakeer, Simon Stylites, had let himself down by a rope ladder, once a day, just to enjoy in the cool of the evening the conversation of the damsels and gossips in the bazaar; and think of the difference it would have made to the saint who used to swing all day with the hook in his back, if some kind friend had taken that hook out of him every day, at the going down of the sun, so that for a couple

of hours at least he might have smoked a pipe and had a chat beneath the village banyan. To what pinnacles of spirituality might not the Fakeer Simon and the hooked saint have risen! But they failed. Simon got no higher, spiritually speaking, than the top of his pillar, and the other holy man never got outside, so to speak, of his dangling hook, because they were always attached to these foolish things. And now their sayings, if they ever said anything, and their discoveries, if they ever made any, in Theology and Morals, are quite lost and forgotten, just for want of that little daily intermission and rest, which would have brightened them up and inspired them with words of wisdom.

These general reflections applied to Valentine mean that too much Hoxton for those who have the best interests of Hoxton at heart is bad for Hoxton.

When Valentine went down stairs, she found her friend the letter writer starting on his daily round among the German immigrants. There had been recently quite a large importation of Polish Jews who were making a little Yiddish Poland for themselves up a court. I think they had brought with them a great many barrels of native dirt, so as to feel home-like; and were now living on charity, in the begging of which the scribe was making an unusual harvest. He was doing so well that he had bought a new pair of second-hand boots; like a tax-gatherer, he carried his ink in one waistcoat-pocket and his pen in another, while his writing-paper lay in a shabby old leather case, which perhaps was once brown, but now was black with age. He greeted Valentine with cheerfulness, though the Bishop at the moment was lying grievously ill, and his family were gathered at the Palace, and three physicians were in consultation.

‘But suppose the Bishop dies,’ said Valentine; ‘then your dream will be finished.’

‘Yes,’ he answered, with his soft and gentle smile. ‘Yes, if the Bishop does not recover, my dream will be finished indeed; for I am the Bishop, you know. You are leaving us to-day?’

‘To-morrow morning. I have got, where I am going, another mother and another sister. Do you not think it is time I went to see them?’

They were standing in the court, between the little Chapel and the open space on the south side, where two or three houses have been pulled down. The old man pointed with his stick to Melenda’s window, which was open, showing the new clean blind and the new curtains; next, he passed that stick slowly before

all the houses comprehensively and severally, meaning to include them all; and then he pointed to the little children swarming about the place like tadpoles in a pond; and, lastly, he indicated the women, bustling about their daily tasks. He did this solemnly and slowly, as one who hath a thing to say and thus delivers his soul.

‘Do you know,’ he asked, after performing this ceremony, ‘do you know what they are saying, all of them, at your departure?’

‘What are they saying?’

‘They are saying, “Return, O Shulamite!”’

He walked away slowly, with his rounded shoulders, his long grey hair, and his ragged coat; an old man who ought to have been taken right away and forbidden to work any more; who should have been provided with all kinds of things that are pleasant to old men—with books and sunshine and warmth and companionship. In a well-ordered State this will be done for all the old men alike, from saint to sinner, from Duke to ditcher. But nothing can ever be done now for this individual poor old man, and you will presently discover why.

‘Return, O Shulamite!’ The words lingered in her ears; the sweet old words of love and yearning.

Did they want her to return? Had she done anything to anybody during her three months that they should want her to come back to them, or that they should miss her presence among them?

There is a Sense which lies dormant with most of us. It may always be awakened, and, once roused, it never leaves us. Let us call it, if you please, the Sense of humanity. It is not philanthropy, nor benevolence, nor sentimentality; it is a thing much fuller and wider than any of these. Peter got this Sense when he had the Vision of the Great Sheet. It is the Sense of the Universal Brotherhood. Some of the French Republicans were filled with it when they first began to shout their cry of Equality and Fraternity. Some of the Socialists are filled with this sense: it has nothing to do with religion or with creed: the lives of the Saints are full of the stories of men who have had this sense strongly developed; the lives of the Sinners, which have yet to be written—would that I could attempt that stupendous task!—will also be found quite full of such stories. Saint or Sinner, it matters not; the Sense of Humanity may be found in either. One may be a Peer and have it; one may be a beggar and have it not. Those who have it, and have developed

it, are like mathematicians, when they resolve all plane forces to two, and all forces in space to three, for they presently resolve humanity into the simple pair—the man and the woman; or, to be practical, since in the world there are no planes, but everything is of three dimensions, into the man, the woman, and the child. It is a Sense by means of which one is enabled to separate the man from his clothes, whether they are rags or gowns of office, and from his sins, whether they be those which society allows, or those which are not recognised; and—which is a dark saying—it destroys respect and yet builds up reverence. Valentine had discovered this Sense; she had awakened it in Claude; she saw it in Sam, in the Doctor, and in the Assistant Priest.

When the letter-writer had passed out of Ivy Lane Valentine remembered the old woman who lived below her and got drunk whenever she could. She was not at all a nice old person, but Valentine thought she would see her before she departed—it would be neighbourly. So she knocked at her door and went in. This morning she looked very dreadful, because she had been tipsy the evening before, and had got a bruise round one eye, and the other was red; her lips were tremulous and her cheeks blotched; also she wore no cap, which was an error in Art, because her head was bald in patches. Queen Venus, when she is old and bald, ought at least to wear a cap. And she was muttering over her work, which, as has already been stated, was intimately connected with approaching funerals.

‘Well, my dear,’ she said cheerfully, ‘and how is the sweet young gentleman? And how long are you going to stay here?’  
‘I am going away to-morrow. I came to see if I could do anything for you before I go.’

‘There, now! I said there’d be a wedding when I saw you in St. Luke’s graveyard with him. A sweet young couple indeed. Ah! it does an old woman’s heart good to let her eyes fall on such.’

‘But I am not going to be married.’

‘Well, my dear, it won’t matter much how you arrange it. And there’ll be another match soon, unless I’m mistaken, with Liz upstairs—there’s another pretty one for you—and her young gentleman. Oh! I’ve seen them together too.’

‘Is there anything I can do for you before I go?’

‘Well,’ said the old woman, ‘I daresay he’s given you some money. He looks the sort to be free of money.’

‘I tell you I’m not going to be married.’

‘I didn’t say you were, my dearie. But if you’ve a shilling



upon you to spare, I'd thank you for it. Get all you can, my dear, get all you can while your time lasts.'

She looked detestably cunning and inconceivably wicked. Valentine, however, found a coin for her.

'The air's getting fresh now,' the old lady went on, 'and the nights are cold. When it's too cold to sit without a fire and to sleep without blankets, I've got to go back to the 'Ouse. It's warm there, if it's nothing else. You think it's hard, but wait till you're as old as me, my dear, and see if you don't come to it as well. Make yourself happy while you can. It's no use saving; spend and enjoy all you can get while you are young, my pretty. When you're old you'll have the remembrance of it, and it'll make you feel happy just to think that you didn't let the good times slip past. Don't forget me next year if I'm spared to come out. Oh! it does one good in such a place as this, even to see a pretty girl with a proper frock on. But there, you won't be pretty when you come back here. Lord! what a figure I had once! And I can tell you about the time when I had a house of my own!'

Valentine left her at the commencement of these recollections. Eve, in age and decay, long after she had eaten, not one, but all the forbidden apples within reach, and longed for those out of her reach, may have looked so and talked so. A curious case for the spiritual physician. Next year she will be 'out' again, for these old women are tough and long-lived; and perhaps for many years she will continue to be alternately 'in' and 'out,' and to exist as an example and a warning for the young. This dear lady, too, ought to be taken away and carefully cherished, with warmth and good food, and the semblance of liberty. Not that she would ever repent her of her sins, or wish the memory of the past to be other than it is, or get a gleam of light into her darkened soul about a better life. A better plan, perhaps, would be painless and sudden extinction. But the old lady, who, I suppose, would have to be consulted, for form's sake, is not yet educated to the point of perceiving how much her disappearance would benefit mankind. The subject opens a wide field for speculation, for there are so many among us who might with advantage be painlessly and unexpectedly extinguished.

Valentine proceeded on her way down Ivy Lane calling at the houses where she had friends, that is to say, at nearly every house. The children ran after her as she went, catching at her hands and hanging to her skirts. That means nothing, because children are so foolish as to trust and love every one who is kind to them. 'Come back soon,' they cried; 'Come back soon.' Then from

the children Valentine went to see her friends the workwomen in their rooms. She knew, by this time, dozens of them, which is not difficult in this Thimble-and-Thread-Land, where there are so many thousands always at work. The women paused in their work for a minute to bid her farewell. There was the young tailoress of nineteen with two babies and a husband out of work, and her mother who looked after the babies, while she worked from seven in the morning till ten at night, for eight shillings a week, less the cost of coal and candle, soap and cotton. She was a handsome, capable-looking girl, with square chin, fresh lips, and strong eyes. She looked up and laughed a welcome, and when Valentine bade her farewell, she cried, but not for long, although a whole hour's crying would only have cost her a penny and one-fifteenth. 'But you'll come back soon,' she said. Then there was the woman who lived on the ground-floor, working all day long for bare life, with her daughter; there was the old lady with the imbecile husband, who worked for both; there was the girl who ought to have been married some years before, and there was the girl who ought not to have been married for some years to come; they all stopped to bid her farewell and to say 'Come back soon,' and then returned again to their breathless and headstrong flight from the Fury of Famine, who pursues them continually with a scourge of knotted cord, or a flagellum loaded with lead, such as that with which the Romans corrected disobedient slaves. Then there were the older women with their great families—Nature, very oddly, when the Horn of Plenty is quite empty, always fills it with babies. How bravely they work, these mothers! And how their faces harden, and how early the lines gather round lips and eyes! Surely, as the girls murmur when the drilling begins, surely, 'it is a Shame!'

And from them too, from every room into which Valentine had found her way, from every court there came the cry, 'Come back soon'—'Return, O Shulamite!' Strange how the words lingered in her ear and repeated themselves—words sometimes will just as if they followed one about or were echoed within the recesses of the brain.

At the door of the Boys' Institute, she met the Rev. Mr. Randal Smith. He was looking pale and overworked, because he had been in London all the summer; and besides, had given away his money, and had none to go on holiday with; and his long coat and broad-brimmed black hat were shabby because he could not afford new ones, and he looked faded, and dejected, and boyish, and without dignity.

'I know you are going,' he said gloomily. 'The Doctor told me.'

'I am coming back again.'

'It is wonderful that you stayed so long. We shall miss you, though you never come to church.'

'Not to your church.'

'Oh! what a power for good you might be if you chose! Why, you might bring all those boys of mine to church: they would follow you. It's the only thing for them—Church Discipline and Confession. I know you laugh at us; but there is nothing except the confessional for getting a hold over the people and putting the priests in their right place.'

'Well, Mr. Smith, if you will confess to the Doctor, I dare say he will confess to you. Will not that satisfy you? Never mind your confessional, tell me about yourself. You look pale—you want a holiday.'

'I cannot get one, unfortunately.'

As Valentine considered this young man she remembered that it was for some such life as this, without the choral services, that Claude was giving up his career. What if he should weary of it?

'Tell me,' she said, 'you who work so hard and do so much for the boys—are you contented with your life?'

'I am quite contented with it. I ask for nothing better.'

'That is a brave thing to say. Would you, if you had the chance, exchange it for an easier life and a larger income?'

'Not now,' he replied sturdily. 'When I grow old and feeble I should like a stronger man to come here.'

'Do you think that everybody engaged in such work as this continues to be as satisfied and contented?'

'I think so. We must not desire anything beyond the work that we are set to do.'

'Do you never wish,' Valentine continued, 'for opportunities of distinction? Are you never ambitious?'

'I have no other ambition,' he replied, with an ecclesiastical tag and a return of the breathless manner, 'than to be a faithful servant.' In fact, he had no desire for distinction at all, probably because in quite early life he understood that he was neither sharp nor clever.

'And do you never,' she asked, 'do you never think of love or marriage?' She was asking all these questions in the interest, so to speak, of Claude, and she suddenly, but too late, remembered what the Doctor had told her. This young man had been

thinking about love. 'Forgive me,' she said hurriedly, because he blushed and trembled and looked about for the earth to swallow him; 'forgive me, Mr. Smith, I ought not to have asked you that question.'

'It—it doesn't matter. Thank you,' he said, 'it's of no consequence.'

'I was only wondering,' she explained, 'whether in such work as yours there never comes a sense of weariness, as if it was all no good and one might as well be living like the rest of the world.'

'There is no weariness of the work. Sometimes, perhaps, sometimes one thinks of a life—with—with love in it.' His eyes dropped, and he blushed again.

'No weariness in the work. That never palls, does it?'

'Well,' he was really a truthful young man, 'there are the church services. It is no doubt the best discipline possible for a man, and of course we say matins and evensong for the whole parish, but as nobody ever comes to hear them, one sometimes feels as if there were too many services.'

'So I should think.'

'It is a weakness of the flesh which I hope to overcome in time.'

She touched his hand and left him with a pleasing and rather uncommon mixture in her heart, composed of admiration, respect, and pity in equal parts, and just as one adds to a claret cup a little sprig of borage, or a strawberry, so she added the merest dash of contempt. His life was so hard—he was so contented, so courageous, and so unselfish—he was so patient—he thought so little of himself—he was so free from any ambition except to be, as he said, a faithful servant—he accepted with so much meekness the tiresome and useless things which wasted his time and dragged him from his real work, the daily chanting of services which nobody attended, the weary iteration of litanies in an empty church and the fripperies which this poor ignorant lad took for the true religion of the past, the present, and the future; a religion in which, he thought, there was to be no singing except of Gregorian chants; and no sunshine except through painted windows; and no attitude for the laity in *secula seculorum*, except of continual genuflexion before a close-shaven man in a cassock and a cope and a biretta cap, surrounded by boys in white surplices with pots of incense.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE LAST EVENING.

'You must spend this evening with us, Claude,' said Valentine; 'it is my last evening, and we are going to have tea in Melenda's room. Besides, I want you to say all sorts of kind things to the poor girl.'

'Your last evening! A good deal has happened, Valentine, since you came here first.'

'Yes, a great deal has happened. But, Claude, we must get those lines out of your forehead and the depression out of your eyes.' See how readily men betray their trouble.

'You will not do that easily, Valentine,' he said, with a forced laugh. 'The fates are too strong even for you.'

She was now quite certain that the trouble of his soul could only be caused by some knowledge of her father's history, but she could not learn how much he knew.

'You do not regret your choice, Claude.'

'I had no choice,' he replied gloomily; 'I thought I had. But I had not. There are some men, Valentine, who are condemned to obscurity from the very beginning; they can only be happy when they are unknown and forgotten.'

Claude was more than usually gloomy because he was suffering from an acute attack of a complaint not described in any book on medicine. Celsus and Galen ignore its symptoms. It has no name, but it is caused by family or paternal shame. His excellent father, who found in the torture of his son a truly delightful amusement, and concluded that the daughter, who lived in Hoxton, was not worth following up so long as she paid her weekly sovereign, now visited his chambers at all hours, having a master-key which he had made for himself. He borrowed Claude's clothes; he drank his wine; he sat there and fiddled all day long; he smoked tobacco there; he opened all the desks and drawers and read all the private papers—even those verses with which every young man loves to comfort his soul, and the letters from his friends; he came in the morning and stayed all day; he came in the evening and stayed all night. Claude might give up his chambers, but the man would follow him, and what would be the end? He demanded money perpetually, and always got some, if not all that he asked, by the exercise of a very simple

threat. If he did not get it he would go to his daughters. He had even begun to take away things which were portable and might be pawned, such as the silver mugs, those volumes which were expensively bound, and the pictures; honestly, however, giving his son the pawn tickets.

Claude made no objection at all. Let the man go on; let him strip the place; let him do what he pleased, so that he remained unknown to the rest of his family.

Claude forced himself, however, to assume a pretence of cheerfulness, and stayed with Valentine. They all had tea together in Melenda's room. It was a quiet party; Melenda, to begin with, was shy, and as yet a little awkward in the performance of her new character as Melenda the Amiable. Yet she looked the part. The new dressing of her hair changed her face, her eyes were no longer fierce; two days only of good food had taken the hungry look out of her face; she was in repose, and she was afraid of her brother, who, however, said nothing about the great and startling transformation—not even to offer a word of congratulation, being quite absorbed in thought about other things. As for Lizzie, she was still under the influence of Repentance, and not without fear that her lover might himself come to the house, and insist on her promises being kept. Moreover, the Shadow of Death rested upon the place, and in the next room lay one who patiently awaited the summons.

The autumn day was already closed, for in the middle of October the sun sets at five; the curtains were drawn, the lamp was lit, the fire burning, and Melenda, in the newly-born joy of her own humiliation, thought the room looked almost as lovely as Valentine's; and after tea they sat round the fire, Valentine holding Melenda's hand in her own.

About seven o'clock they heard steps upon the stairs, and there appeared at the door no other than Joe himself, accompanied by his daughter Rhoda, and Sam.

'Mother told us,' he said, 'that you were going away to-morrow. Why, what in the name o' wonder has come over the place?' For Melenda's room, he perceived, was transformed into a lady's bower.

'It is only that Melenda and I are friends at last,' Valentine explained. 'Come in, Rhoda dear: come in, Sam.'

'And so I thought I'd come. Well, I shouldn't ha' known the place, Melenda, I shouldn't really—nor you neither, I shouldn't—and I brought Rhoder along with me, and we went out of our way



to fetch Sam. Look at your Aunt Melenda, my gal; now she's something like. I never knew you were so well worth lookin' at, Melenda.' Melenda blushed and laughed.

'Sit down, Joe,' said Valentine. 'Rhoda, you take my chair. Sam, you must sit on the bed, unless you like to stand.'

So, for the first time since the departure of Polly into the aristocratic world, the whole of this remarkable family, counting Valentine as Polly, were gathered together. The vicissitudes of families have furnished many subjects for the moralist and the storyteller, as well as for the genealogist. In every House there are those who have climbed or are climbing, and those who have gone under and are still going lower. Down goes Jack, and with him his whole detachment. Up goes Dick, and with him his sons and his daughters and his grandchildren. But it is rare to find so much variety in one group and one generation. It is not usual, for instance, for a Fellow of Trinity to have one sister a needlewoman, and another a young lady; nor is it a general thing for a plumber's man to have one brother a Board School Master, and one a Cambridge Scholar. It is also unusual, Claude reflected, for any family to have a father with so remarkable a history as their own.

'You're going away,' Joe repeated slowly, looking still at Melenda, whose changed appearance fascinated him. 'You're going away.' It is the place of the elder brother to give utterance for the family on all occasions of importance, and on every *conseil de famille*. Joe accepted his responsibility, and was always ready to perform his duties as Head of the Family, though Claude might be a gentleman, and Sam had achieved greatness. 'You're going away to-morrow; well, you've done a deal o' good to us since you came. Mother, she'll miss you more than a bit. We left her cryin', didn't we, Rhoder. And so will the girls here—they'll miss you terrible, won't you, Melenda? Lord! it's wonderful. You look just exactly like a girl out of a shop, quiet and respectable, instead of going about in rags, and flying in one's face like a wild cat. And you'll miss her too, Liz; and as for that poor girl in the next room—your own room too—what in the world will she do without you?'

'But I'm not going away for long. I am coming back. I am going to live in Hoxton; so is Claude.'

Sam grunted.

'There was two of you came first,' Joe went on slowly. 'You said then as you didn't know which of the two was Polly. As for

the other one, she hasn't come again, has she? Very well; first, we don't need to say much about you before your face, do we? No. When you go away, whether it's for short or for long, there's some you've left behind who'll remember you, ain't there, Melenda?'

'She knows there is,' said Melenda.

'Well, and about the other one now. If it should happen,'—he said this very slowly, so that there might be no possibility of any mistake—'I wish to say—for all of us—that if it should happen to come to pass that the other one was to turn out to be Polly after all, and not you at all; and that you should turn out to be her ladyship's daughter, Miss Beatrice—which it may be for aught I know—why, I want to give you a message for the other one.'

'Yes, Joe, what is the message?'

'It is a message from all of us; from Melenda, and Sam, and Claude, as well as from me. It's to tell her not to be ashamed of her family, because her father was a man with such a character for Truth and Honesty as very few men can boast, and a clever workman as well'— Oh, Joe!—Claude and Valentine glanced involuntarily at each other. 'That's what I've always told Claude. Don't let her be ashamed of her father; and as for us, why we don't expect her to come and live with us as you've done; we don't ask her, nor we don't expect her. We know that she's a young lady accustomed to live among young ladies, and we're on'y plain working people. It's enough that you've come. We haven't harmed you, have we? You've heard a bit of rough talk now and then; perhaps you've seen a bit o' rough ways, and found out a deal of things you never suspected before, I daresay; but our people haven't harmed you—our people never will harm any respectable girl. If she'd wanted us, she'd have come to us with you. So you tell her that she's a sweet young lady to look at, and we like to think of her pretty face, but we shan't take it amiss that she don't come to us, because she is not one of us. Don't forget to tell her that—not one of us has got anything to ask of her or to take of her.' Sam snorted, and Melenda tossed her head. She had surrendered to one and not to both. 'She needn't be a bit afraid that any of her relations will ever seek her out, or intrude upon her, except Claude, and he's a gentleman. I don't see that she's any call to be ashamed of us as honest and respectable people, ain't we, Melenda? and one of us has worked himself up noble, hasn't he, Sam? As for her father, you tell her

again that he was one in a thousand—ah!—as one may say, one of a thousand for honesty.'

With the repetition of this Colossal falsehood, Joe paused. Then he added a few words of personal application, just as a clergyman winds up his discourse.

'As for you,' he said, 'whether you are Polly, or whether you are not, you're a lady, and such we are glad to see. You can't come too often nor stay too long. You don't want to poke your nose into the working-man's affairs, as some ladies do; you don't think your duty lays in giving advice gratis; you don't want to manage folk as if they were Sunday School children; you don't come the Temperance Gospel nor the Blood and Fire Hallelujah over us; you don't look at us as if we were specimens in a museum; you don't sniff and make believe as if you were sorry for us all when there's a little mess about the place; when a chap's in trouble or down in his luck, you don't wait for three weeks while the case is gone into; you don't talk about us as if we working people were the Poor, and everybody else was the Rich. Sam does that when he gets into a rage, but it don't amount to more than slashing into the System. Sam thinks he can make us all rich and happy with a new System. Lord! there ain't a great deal of difference between us after all; it's mostly a matter of clothes. Look at Melenda, now you've smartened her up. She ain't so pretty as you, but now she's dressed and quiet, she looks as nice mannered, almost.'

'Thank you, Joe,' said Valentine. 'If it should be as you think, and Violet should prefer her present life, which is possible, I will tell her what you say. If it should not be so, why, all the more reason for my coming back to live among my own people, and to be proud of my brothers. Oh! Joe, I do think you are the best fellow in the world.' For that brave sticking out for his worthless father, so that the brothers and sisters might never be ashamed, and never even suspect the truth, went straight to her heart.

'And now we'll go,' said Joe. 'Come, Rhoder. Good-bye, Miss Eldridge.' He took her hand respectfully, not fraternally, and she clearly perceived that he knew her secret.

Then Melenda and Lizzie went to look after Lotty, and the three who remained began to talk.

'And what are you going to do when you come back?' asked Sam. 'You can't do any general good, though you may do something for these three girls. Nothing can be done of any real

use until the System is changed, and we've begun by putting the Land on a proper footing. That's at the bottom of all.'

'You shall settle that, Sam,' said Valentine. 'Meantime we shall take the world as it is, and go on tinkering in our small way, until your revolution sets everything right for ever after.'

'What's the use of arguing with a woman?' Sam asked, turning to Claude. 'Here we are, working up for the grandest change the world has ever seen—the change that is going to give the people their own back again—and she keeps on at us because we don't stop to make a fuss about the workwomen.'

'We cannot expect you, with such a magnificent scheme in your head, to think about your sisters, Sam, can we?'

'It will all come in time. I am thinking about them, I tell you. When we've abolished rent and competition, and interest, and capital; when we've nationalised the land, and prevented anybody from getting rich, and made everybody work, I suppose women's wages will be as good as men's; that is, they will all be alike, and they'll mean a good living to everybody—won't that satisfy you?'

'Perhaps, when it comes. But, Sam, how long it is in coming? And suppose we don't like it when it does come? Suppose you only make it more possible for selfish men to use the labour of others, and for strong men to trample on the weak?'

'You are talking nonsense. You don't know the very first beginnings of our revolution.'

'Claude, have you nothing to say?'

Claude hesitated. Things had grown terribly real with him of late, and he spoke slowly and with sadness. 'I do not suppose,' he said, 'that some men are born with saddles fitted to their backs, and others with spurs on their heels. And I think that Maurice was right when he taught that the reign of Universal Competition is not exactly and altogether the Kingdom of Heaven. And I do not believe that the Lord is always on the side of the man who is making money.'

'Very good,' said Sam. 'Why, this is just as I would begin myself.'

'But I am certain there is no System, or Institution, or code of laws, whatever, which can be imposed upon a people, unless they are ready for it, and desire it for themselves. You will never live to see your dream realised, Sam, because it will be always impossible to make the men of ability, who are the only men to be considered, desire a system in which they themselves

shall not be able to do good to themselves first. If it were established to-morrow, it would fall to pieces the next day, for want of incessant and universal watchfulness. I think we had better take the world as it is, and use the materials lying ready to our hands.'

'Oh! the world as it is,' Sam repeated, 'with the Lords and the Church, and the parsons, and the landlords, and the manufacturers, and the capitalists!'

'With all of them—just as it is—let us take it as it is. Meanwhile there is a Revolution going on of which you know nothing. It is a movement which will be perhaps one of the greatest things that the world has ever seen.' He did not mean the Earthly Tract Society. 'Men and women who have learned all that science and art and history and philosophy can teach them, are returning to the soil and to the gutter from which their fathers sprang. They come back laden with treasures, which they long to lavish among the people. This is to practise the Christianity which you advanced Thinkers despise. Consider another thing, Sam. It is not only that these missionaries will live among the people and teach them all kinds of things, but they will bring the fierce light of publicity to bear upon their ways and their wants. Do you think that any employer in the world would dare to pay his working women as Melenda has been paid, and to treat them with the cruelty of drilling as she has been treated, if he knew that his name and his rate of pay and his treatment of woman would the very next day be paraded in the public press? The power of publicity has only just commenced. The Journalists as yet only half understand their own power. Why, these men and women are going about actually setting up electric lamps in dark places. Let us try to bring this light into all the workshops, so that no kind of grinding and tyranny shall be overlooked. You know what the Russian student said at the grave of his dead comrade, while the police stood by ready to arrest him for a word; "My brothers," he said, stretching out his arms, "Light! We want more light." With light, everything may come; even some of the universal unselfishness, Sam, which your generous heart thinks possible. At least, the first steps will be taken when the people begin by themselves to resolve that justice and equity shall be meted out to all, even to the London working-girl. And as for systems, the force of opinion is stronger than any system. Opinion is the will of the people; let us get opinion on the side of the girls. And then—Light—more Light.'



## CHAPTER XXX.

## THE BISHOP'S DEATHBED.

It was about nine o'clock when Sam left them. He was angry, because he could not convince them, and because his brother was so very near the gate of truth, and so very perverse in his refusal to step in. And yet, said Sam to himself, logic, justice, equity, reason, natural religion, the laws of the Universe—everything cries aloud that there is no Gospel but Socialism. All men are born equal—every man with two legs and ten fingers, and no possessions at all, not a scrap of purple velvet, and not a shovelful of land; no spurs on his heels, and no saddle on his back; no crown on his head, and no chains on his wrists: for every one the same inheritance, namely, the whole of the round world and all that therein is, that is, as much of it as, divided among the  $x$  inhabitants, in equal portions, constitutes his share. Every man must work every day for the general good, he must eat at a common table—why should one man have cutlets à la Soubise, and another, cold pig? He must share in all the luxuries that are attainable by every one: if there be other luxuries which are not enough to go round, they may be divided among the sick and the aged; why should one man drink champagne and another vin bleu? This is Sam's position, and, really, it is impossible to dislodge him from it. He is impregnable, because he is perfectly right. Against him, however, is a force with which he and his friends have never reckoned; it is sometimes called Human Nature. It is, in fact, the simple, unarmed, naked, natural Man, who, alone, is a match for a host, armed with all the weapons of logic, and reason, and right, because of his selfishness, which is a whole armour in itself. He wants all he can grab for himself, and he will go on grabbing all he can. He derides equality; he holds that the spoils are for the strongest; and on this principle he is resolved to live, and so will continue to live until the Kingdom of Heaven comes to change all, and make his position disagreeable. Such being the habit, custom, resolution, and attitude of the Natural Man, the Socialist may rage furiously, but he will rage in vain.

'I must go, too,' said Claude, taking his hat; 'I am glad they came to-night. Alas! the summer is over, to-morrow morning you will be gone. Good-night, Valentine, and farewell.'

'Why a solemn farewell, Claude?'

'Because the past can never be repeated——'

'Nothing is ever repeated; but things can be continued. If you are going to walk, let me walk a part of the way with you. Oh! I am not afraid of returning alone, no one ever molests me. I am just a shop-girl going home, you know, after business.'

They went out together. The streets were crowded, because it was fine, and a Saturday night. Even Pitfield Street and East Road, which are considered quiet thoroughfares, were filled with costers' carts, and with folk who came out to buy. The City Road was noisy with multitudinous footsteps, and a good half of Old Street was blocked with the overflow of Whitecross Street, where there is held every day and every evening the noblest costers' market in the whole of London, not even excepting that of the Whitechapel Road. The space is more limited; but then, the very narrowness sets off the variety and cheapness of the goods displayed. Many costers' markets there be in this great town: one would not willingly do injustice to Clare Market, to the New Cut, to the High Street, Marylebone, or to Leather Lane; but that of Whitecross Street outshines them all.

'These faces haunt me,' said Valentine, as they moved slowly through the crowd. 'I shall carry home with me a ghostly crowd of faces. How many thousands of faces have I seen here, and none of them alike? The noise is nothing; one does not remember noise, but the faces—the faces remain; they are always with me.'

'If the faces were all boiled down into one by repeated photographs, what sort of a face would it be?'

'Not into one face, Claude; there must be two faces; those of the working-man and the working-woman. I think the man's face would show a certain sluggishness and a good deal of self-indulgence, and in his eyes one would discern a sense of humour; the woman's face would show patience and suffering, and her eyes would be sharp with indignation; they would have no humour in them. Whatever they might turn out they would not be bad faces.'

The English face, compounded of many races, is seldom, in fact, a bad face; it is good-tempered to begin with; it is independent and self-reliant; there is a love of justice in it; there is strength in it; there is capability in it; there is the possibility of wrath in it; such wrath as makes the Englishman, when his blood is roused, the most dangerous animal in the world—

witness the savagery of our soldiers in India not quite thirty years ago; yet the devil faces which one sees in Paris, when the people are out in the streets, are never found in Whitecross Market. To watch the English face is to learn trust in the English people.

'You will cease to think of your troubles, Claude,' said Valentine; 'you will think of these men and women instead, won't you? It will be best for you; and I am sure it is best to let the dead bury the dead.'

'I wish to heaven I could. But suppose the dead refuse to be buried.'

She said no more. Perhaps he had found out even more than she had feared. Presently they reached the end of Old Street where it runs like a broad river into Goswell Road and Aldersgate Street, and here Valentine stopped.

'Good-bye, Claude,' she said; 'come to see us at home to-morrow evening. I am going home again. Oh! I have had the strangest, the most beautiful summer that ever any girl had, and all by your help, Claude. How can I ever thank you enough? I wonder if you can understand at all what it has been to me—this revelation of Men and Women, whom we dare to call common men and women. I am like Peter after the Vision and the Message, which only came to him three times. But my Vision and my Message, Claude, have been repeated to me daily for ninety days.'

'And as for me, Valentine,' he replied huskily, 'I can never tell you; I can never even try to tell you what the summer has been to me.'

He pressed her hand and she left him. She was not, you see, his sister; that he had known all along, and now she would find out the truth, and it was impossible that they should continue together in the old relations. What more? He loved her. Who could help loving her, who was so winsome, so loyal, and so brave? He had always loved her, ever since the day when he found out that she was not his sister; and for her sake he had given up all his ambitions, yea, even the ambition of the Chancellor's wool-sack; and there were moments when it seemed possible, but the appearance of his father made that and everything else impossible; and now, he should never be able to tell her, even in the after years, what she had become to him. How could such a man as himself, with such a Family Record, dare to connect himself, even in thought, with such a girl?

He stood at the corner of the street watching her light figure

speeding quickly along the pavement. Now, either because his heart was so full of love that he could not bear to let the girl go out of his sight, or because a Divine admonition came to him—they do come sometimes and interfere strangely with the fortunes of men, though generally we disregard them, so that rogues triumph—Valentine had not got thirty steps before he felt constrained to turn and follow after her. He did so, keeping a few yards behind her, and not losing sight of her for a moment.

The light figure moved swiftly among the people who crowded the pavement, through the men who lounged hands in pocket, and the women who pushed basket in hand. They made way for her to pass, no one offering her the least familiarity. Some of them, perhaps, knew her by this time. She passed through the crowd and crossed the street to the north side where there were fewer people. Presently she stopped, and Claude watched her while she talked to a girl. I know not what she said, or whether she gave the girl anything, but when Valentine left her that girl went away quickly, and in exactly the opposite direction, which seemed as if she had changed her mind about something. In the City Road she stopped again, to talk with another woman who had a baby in her arms. She did give that woman something, and she, too, turned and walked away in another direction, which leads one to believe that she proposed to go home and put the baby to bed. One of these days we shall have a Female Police in addition to the present highly efficient masculine force. They will be called probably the Female Persuasives, rather than the Female Force; they will carry no clubs or revolvers, and they will be horribly dreaded by all kinds of sinners. When you have crossed the City Road and engaged, so to speak, with Brunswick Place, you are already within the limits of Hoxton itself, and if you are so happy as to live in that City of Industry, you are among friends, and almost at home; therefore you will naturally, as Valentine did, begin, at this point, to walk more slowly.

Claude still followed her, as far as the western entrance of Ivy Lane in St. John's Road. There he would have left her and gone his way, but for a thing which awakened his suspicions. St. John's Road is not better lighted than any other of the less important London streets, where they blindly follow the custom of our ancestors, and plant the gas lamps—each with a glass top artfully designed to let all the light mount upwards to the sky and so be lost—at the same intervals as were thought good in the old days of oil lamps. The conservatism of the official mind is a

truly wonderful subject for contemplation. The street was, however, well enough lighted for Claude to see a figure waiting about on the pavement opposite to Ivy Lane. There were plenty of people walking, but this man was evidently waiting, and when Valentine turned into Ivy Lane, this man crossed the road and followed her.

He followed her at a distance of three or four yards—Claude wondered what it might mean. Then he passed under the gas lamp at the entrance of the street, and Claude saw his face. Heavens! It was the face of his father! What could he want with Valentine, except to break his promise, and molest and frighten her? It was his father, and by a lurch of the shoulders which betrayed him, his father, it was certain, had been drinking.

Claude quickened his step, his first impulse being to stop the man; but he checked himself, because to do so would certainly cause a row in the street. He would wait till Valentine was in her own room. He kept close behind, therefore, ready to interfere for her protection.

The street was pretty full of women, talking, though it was past ten o'clock and the evening was chilly: there were also a good lot of children, shouting and playing. Valentine passed through them, with a word of greeting and a fair good night for each. The crowd parted right and left and made a lane for her, because they knew her; they parted again for Mr. Carey, because the crowd always does make a respectful lane for a man who has been drinking. But for Claude they did not make way, and he had to force his way through, and the children got about his feet, so that the chase drew ahead of him, and he was unable to prevent what most he dreaded.

On the ground floor Valentine found Mr. Lane's door wide open, and his candle burning. She looked in and nodded pleasantly.

'You are feeling well to-night?' she asked.

'Never better, never better,' he replied stoutly. 'Business has been good this week. I think they are beginning to find me out at last. It is strange, too, because I am very near the end of my dream.'

'I hope not. Can't your dream last a little longer?'

'I've got no control over it. You don't expect me to alter the decrees of Fate. The good Bishop is on his deathbed—I am certain he can never recover. The children are with him.



The prayers of all the churches in the Diocese have been offered for him. Many there are who live on, long after sixty-seven: mostly they are men who have only cumbered the ground, whose lives should be an eternal shame to them—men like me—unprofitable dogs. Men like the Bishop are generally called away early, before the allotted span. Well, he will go to his own place. But as for me, what shall I do when he is dead and buried?’

‘Indeed, Mr. Lane, I do not know. You will have to find some other amusement for your evenings.’

‘Amusement? For me?’ He shook his head; and she left him.

Then the old woman who lived at the back came out of her den.

‘There’s been a gentleman asking for you, my dear,’ she said—‘not a young gentleman: oh, no!—an elderly gentleman—quite the gentleman—with a pipe in his mouth, and a little in liquor: and most pleasant in his manners, and liberal and generous.’

‘A gentleman for me?’

‘Yes, my dear, and very anxious he was to know your ways, and asked a many questions!’ (she did not add that he had begun by giving her a florin) ‘about what you do with yourself, and who gives you your money. But I was very careful—oh! I am very careful indeed, my dear—I didn’t let out nothing about the young gentleman. For, thinks I, very likely he may be one of the jealous sort!’

‘Oh!’ said Valentine, impatiently, ‘what have I to do with any elderly gentlemen?’

‘I do hope there’s not going to be any trouble about the young gentleman. P'raps it wasn't jealousy, and to be sure, I have known, more than once, the lawyers to step in at the last moment and stop it, when the banns was on the point of being put up, so to speak, and the wedding-ring bought. Mind, my dear, don't you give up the letters—don't give up a single line of writing—make 'em pay for the letters, if it's five hundred pound—'

‘Here he is again—don't forget about the letters. He do look like a lawyer a bit, come to look at him, don't he?’

It so happened that Mr. Carey, at the very beginning of this evening, and when he had not yet taken more than two or three glasses, had begun to consider the problem of his daughter, and why she lived in Ivy Lane, and where she got her money from,

and by what steps she had come to look like a lady, and what a beautiful thing it would be for himself if he could by any means entrap her, and make her his confederate and partner. Such things have been done; but first it is necessary to know a little of a girl's history. He drank another glass or two, then he resolved that he would himself pay a visit to Ivy Lane and find out what he could. It was a beginning, and he would trust no one but himself. So he came, and began, Valentine being out, by pumping the old lady, who willingly told all she knew, which was little to the point. Then he waited for her return.

'Well, my dear,' he began cheerfully, 'well, Marla, my gal, I've found you out at last—eh? You didn't expect me, did you? Well, this is an agreeable surprise for you, because, my dear, I'll take the liberty, being your father and all, of asking what it means, and how you make your money? It's my duty to see that my children are living honest, and my pleasure to advise them in their courses.'

'Go away!' said Valentine.

The old woman stopped at the foot of the stairs to watch. 'Was he a lawyer? Was it a jealous one?'

'Go away!' Valentine repeated. The man laughed. The drink had given him courage. Otherwise he would have obeyed.

In the front room the dreamer started and looked round: he had heard a voice he knew.

'Come,' Mr. Carey whispered—'let us talk it over friendly. Give me a kiss, my dear.'

He laid his hand upon her shoulder. Valentine shrank from him with a cry. Melenda heard her—flew from her room, and sprang from the top to the bottom of the stairs with one bound, and stood before her.

'Now, then, who are you?' she cried. 'Don't you be afraid, Valentine. It's only some man who's been drinking, and come to the wrong house! I ain't afraid of any man, drunk or sober—don't you mind. Your very last night, too!'

'Now, don't you put your oar in, young woman. You'd best stand out of the way, you had!'

'Go out of this,' said Melenda, firmly, 'or I'll show you the way.'

'Well,' he went on—'if this don't beat all!' He steadied himself, because the drink made him just a little heavy in the head, and just a little uncertain in his speech: 'They ought to

be proud of me—everybody else would be proud of such a man—you'd be proud, you would, my dear—you look like somebody I knew once—you do indeed—it's a most remarkable likeness! There isn't such another man as me in all London. Why, you wouldn't believe it, from the conduct of that skittish little devil there, that I'm James Carey—the great James Carey. Everybody has heard of James Carey! They used to call me the King of the Burglars. I'm King James the First—his Gracious Majesty King Carey. His Royal Highness and Right Reverend King Carey!'

'Go away!' said Melenda, 'or I'll tear you in pieces!'

She hadn't torn anybody to pieces for some time; she had not even enjoyed the luxury of a Rage Royal, since the last day of the drilling. Now she looked fierce enough for anything. But then a hand was laid upon the man's shoulder—

'Come away,' said Claude—'come away without a word!'

'It's the boy,' said the man, with such a gush of horrid blasphemy only possible after a wretched man has swallowed compulsory doses of Scripture for twenty years. 'It's the adjective boy! What's he doing here? Oh! you think you'll get rid of me, do you? The allowances are to stop, are they?' He addressed Claude, because between him and Valentine there stood a tigress with flashing eyes and thirsty talons. 'You'll stop yours, will you? Well, we'll see to that, my young swell, and whether you'll rather pay down, or let me own up—pay down, my boy, or let me own up.' He had not drunk so much but that he was perfectly coherent in his speech, but the drink made him fool-hardy.

'Go!' said Claude.

'I shall not go.' He raised his voice and added a volley, copious and eloquent, of those flowers of language which are so abundant in Ivy Lane as to pass for weeds. 'I shall stay,' he concluded, 'all night if I like.'

By this time a little crowd was gathered round the door, expectant of a row.

Then there happened a strange and wonderful thing. The door of the ground-floor front opened, and there came forth, slowly and unsteadily, the old man whom they all knew, the harmless old man who had lived among them so many years, and had held speech with none. He carried in his one hand a lighted candle. The other hand, raised to his shoulder, trembled and clutched and closed. His face was perfectly white, as white as

the face of a dead man. His long limbs trembled with extreme weakness; his head was bent forward eagerly; his eyes were glaring. It was actually the face of a dead man with living eyes, which gleamed with light supernatural.

'Oh!' he said, with a deep sigh of satisfaction, 'at last I have found mine enemy. I was dying—but I heard his voice. The Bishop'—he turned to Valentine—'the Bishop is dying. And I was dying. But I knew I was not to die till I had seen him once again.' He looked round him as one might look who was taking a last farewell of earth, and he gave his candle to Valentine as one about to die upon the scaffold hands the last thing he values to the last friend beside him.

'No man,' he said, solemnly looking about him, 'hath power in the day of death; neither shall wickedness deliver them who are given to it.' Then a very wonderful change passed suddenly over his face. It became the face of a young man: the change which sometimes falls upon the face of one who is nearly dead fell upon this man's face before his death. Valentine saw it and knew that she was looking upon the man as he had been, save for his white hair, thirty-five years before, while he was yet in honour and respect. Mr. Carey saw it too—and staggered as if struck suddenly.

'You?' he said, 'you? I thought you must be dead long ago.' He became instantly sober, as half-drunken men sometimes do. Then as the long lean figure turned towards him with outstretched arms, he quickly stepped out of the house and fled, running through the people. After him, with long swift strides, followed Vengeance, long deferred. It seemed as if no one noticed them, for no one ran after them, and no one cried after them. They passed through the crowd unheeded, and as if unseen. When Claude thought of this afterwards it seemed to him a thing beyond and above the natural. Though the streets were full of people, this strange flight, this strange pursuit, attracted no attention at all, no more than if they were invisible. But he who fled was filled with a wild and dreadful terror, that which falls upon the heart when some long forgotten crime springs into light, and escape is impossible, and the time of forgiveness is past. And he who followed after was filled with such gladness of rage and satiated revenge as filled the heart of Fredegonde, when, after many years, she saw Brunehaut about to be dragged at the heels of the wild horse. The fugitive ran in vain, for at his heels, though he knew it not, there followed Death, before

whom all fly in vain. He was in the shape of an old man, striding with long steps, bareheaded, his grey hairs flying behind him, in rags, with panting breath, white face, and outstretched arms.

There is a place beyond St. John's Road where a bridge crosses the canal: and beyond the bridge there is a way down to the bank. It is a dark and narrow way. The man ran down here—thinking that he might so escape. But he did not. As he reached the tow-path the avenging hand was laid upon his shoulder. He turned and faced his enemy. Of what should he be afraid? A poor, old, trembling man who had been starving during all the years which he himself had spent in prison, well cared for and well fed. He looked so decrepit that James Carey laughed aloud and forgot his terror. He had been afraid because he had been drinking. That was all. Afraid of a silly old fool too weak to harm a girl.

'Man!' cried Mr. Lane, seizing his enemy with both hands and shaking him by the coat collar, 'Man! give me back my ruined life.'

James Carey would have laughed again, but that his enemy's face became distorted as by sharp and sudden pain—for once more, for the last time, came that clutching and tearing at the heart—and that his enemy's legs trembled and his body swayed to and fro, and they were on the water's edge, and the decrepit hands, strange to say, held him like a vice. Then there was a staggering and a struggle on the gravel: and a cry of agony and terror, and a splash in the water. . . and . . . and . . . why, Mr. Lane had got back his life, and, with it, had already learned, one hopes, why such misery and such weakness as his had been permitted even for such an infinitesimal period of time as thirty-five years. When the victim recovered his life, what did his tempter and oppressor recover?

'Who was it?' asked Melenda, when they were gone.

'A drunken man,' said Valentine.

'But he seemed to know you. And Claude knew him. And what had he done to Lizzie's father?'

'I do not know,' said Claude; 'but I know this of him, that he is a bad man. Do not ask any more, Melenda.'

'Well,' said Melenda, 'he's gone at any rate. Come upstairs, Valentine.'

She left them and went back to Lotty. The old woman, feeling the florin burn in her pocket, stole out gently, and made for the public-house opposite by a circuitous route, namely, half down

Ivy Lane and back again, so that she should not seem like going out expressly for a drop of gin. She would only have two two-penny goes and drink up the rest on the morrow—Sunday. And on Monday she would go 'in' again for the winter. Oh! this florin was a blessed windfall indeed, because now she would be able to go back to the House with some of the resignation which accompanies recent gin. The crowd at the door had dispersed, disappointed; there are always more disappointments than real rows; things seldom come off in all their possible fulness.

'The man is gone, Valentine,' said Claude. 'Do you know who he is?'

'Yes, I know him. Something terrible will happen. The other man—Lizzie's father—will do him a mischief; they are old enemies. Oh, it is more wickedness.'

'If there is to be more trouble,' said Claude, 'somebody must be here to meet it for you. Go upstairs, now, Valentine. Good night.'

Valentine obeyed. She did not ask Claude how he came to be there; it was natural that if she was in any danger he should be there to protect her. Nor did she ask Claude how he came to know the man.

Meanwhile, Claude shut the street door, and sat down on the stairs and waited. They were very uncomfortable stairs to sit upon, being steep and with narrow steps. The candle left in the room beside him went on burning until midnight, when it went out suddenly after just one flicker in the socket. Then the stairs were in perfect darkness, but the front room was lighted by the gas lamp in the street. Outside, the talk of the people grew languid, and finally ceased altogether, and the shuffling of their feet was heard no more; the children left off shouting and crying and went away to bed; the public-house shut up, and the men in the bar dispersed noisily; there was an occasional step of a belated resident, and then nothing but an echo of steps from Hoxton Street, or the distant shouting of some drunken man.

Claude sat on his uncomfortable perch for two or three hours, and then he remembered that there was a chair in the next room. He changed his position, but he did not allow himself to sleep. Strange! that the old man did not return. Had something happened? His mind was agitated and full of foreboding.

In the middle of October the nights are long: the sun does not rise until after six. Claude waited and watched through the



whole of that long night, for seven long hours. Neither of the two men came back. As for one, he was probably in the Temple asleep on Claude's bed, or drinking and smoking and fiddling through the night. But the other—Lizzie's father—where was he?'

And what would come of it all? What would be the end? As for Valentine, in a few hours she would be safe; in two days more she would know that she was not this man's daughter at all. She knew who he was: she said so. How did she know it? How much did she know? There was plenty to occupy his thoughts all through the night.

The morning broke at last—Sunday morning. At the first streak of daybreak Claude went out into the court, as if expecting to find there some traces of the missing pair. The air was keen and clear; Ivy Lane, as the light grew stronger, looked inconceivably disreputable, shabby and dirty, with the wreckage and rubbish of a week lying about, the cabbage stalks, bruised plums, rotten apples and pears, the shreds of paper and potsherds. Well, Valentine was going away: she was no longer to be considered: he was free, so far as she was concerned. He would go to Joe and tell him all; between the two their mother would be protected; he would give nothing more to his father, and as for his real name and the family history, let them both be proclaimed upon the housetops, with all the infamy and the shame of it, if needs must.

'Thank God,' he murmured—'Valentine is not his daughter!'

A little before eight, there was already some stir among the younger and hungrier residents; the elders lie in bed as long as they can on Sunday mornings; and when the bell of St. Agatha's was calling upon a deaf and stiffnecked people to get up and come to early celebration, and the assistant priest was hastily robing himself for that lonely Function, and the shops in Hoxton were getting swept out and garnished for the Sunday morning market, Valentine came downstairs.

'You here already, Claude?' she asked, surprised.

'Why, Valentine, you did not suppose I should go away and leave you unprotected, did you?'

'You have actually been here all night? You have been watching for me? Oh, Claude! it is too much!'

'Nothing is too much for you, Valentine. Don't think of me, but tell me—what do you know of this man? Why does he come here? Why did he follow you?'

‘What do you know, Claude?’

‘I know all that there is to know: the whole shameful business.’

‘And I, too, know all that there is to know. Do not pain yourself to speak about it. I have known the whole story for a month—Joe and the mother both think he is dead.’

‘But how did you come to know him?’

Valentine told her tale, briefly; and passing over one or two passages, especially that in which she was constrained to box the man’s ears.

‘I bought his silence,’ she concluded—‘I sent him money every week. But I knew that some time or other it would be found out. Claude, be brave—let us take Joe into our confidence and devise something that will keep him from the others.’

‘I bought him, too,’ said Claude—‘but I will give him no more money. Thank Heaven, you are out of his reach, and so is Violet: she must never know. As for the others——’

‘Let us persuade him to go away, Claude. He may be bribed.’

‘He will never go away as long as there is a house left in England that he has not robbed.’

There are so many houses in London alone, that the prospect opened up was more stupendous than the mind of man can well take in. And to think, besides, that new houses are always being built.

‘At least, Valentine,’ Claude went on, ‘you are going home this very day. Go at once—if you go now you will find them at breakfast—if you stay here, there may be, I know not, some terrible tragedy. I feel as if anything may happen! Why has not that old man been home all night? And they were enemies, you say. Go at once, Valentine, before any scandal happens which may involve your name. So much, at least, we owe to Lady Mildred. I will get you a cab. Have you anything to pack?’

She obeyed. There was nothing that she wished to take away. She transferred the care of Lotty to Melenda, kissed the girls, promised to return in a day or two, and hurried away, with the sense that something was going to happen.

Claude remained, watching in Mr. Lane’s room, all the morning. Presently Lizzie came downstairs to see her father, and appeared neither astonished nor alarmed to hear that he had not been home all night. He had slept out before, when he had work to do. Claude told her nothing of what he knew or suspected. He must have gone down Whitechapel way she said,

among the German Jews, who regard not the Christian Sabbath when they want work done.

At one o'clock the 'Adelaide' opened its hospitable doors, and the old lady of the back ground-floor crossed the court, and proceeded to spend what was left of her florin. In half an hour she came out, with trembling lips and glassy eyes, and returned to her own room, where she flung herself upon the floor heavily, the door wide open, careless of the world, to sleep off the last drink she would get for six months, at least.

At two, Claude thought he would wait no longer. Perhaps his father might have gone to the Temple.

He had not—no one was there, and there were no traces at all of his presence. Nothing had been taken away, no tobacco was on the table, and there were no empty bottles. This was very strange. Surely something must have happened!

*(To be continued.)*

## *Hobart Pasha.*

THE name of Hobart Pasha has been for so many years prominently before the naval world, and always as that of the hero of some adventure which would seem wild if told of anybody else; he has appeared so full of life, of energy, and of 'go,' that probably few of us, even though we knew or could calculate his age, had realised that he was in reality approaching his sixty-fifth birthday; and our first idea, on hearing of his death last June, was that he had been prematurely taken from us. But at sixty-four, Hobart was no longer a young man; and though he could scarcely be called old, yet, in the fullest sense of the word, he had lived. Few men, in this age of civilisation, have succeeded in crowding more excitement into the short space of time that lies between the cradle and the grave. It is satisfactory to find that some picture of the man, as he was, has been preserved to us in the autobiographical sketches<sup>1</sup> written during the last few months of his life, and now edited by his widow. These cannot be considered as a biography; nor, indeed, do they make any pretence of being one. There is no attempt to fill in the details, many of which are purposely obscured; but they serve better than the most minute and the most scurrilous chronicle to present to the reader the portrait of the very remarkable man who has thus recorded his reminiscences of adventure and of service, by the light of an experience varied beyond that of any man of the generation now passing away, or perhaps even of any man of the former age, with the exception of Lord Dundonald, to whose career Hobart's offers some curious points of resemblance. If we here endeavour to repeat the story of this life, it is assuredly not with any intention of filling up the pages which he designedly left blank; but rather to give, in a short space, greater currency to the notes which he has bequeathed to us.

<sup>1</sup> *Sketches from my Life*, by the late Admiral Hobart Pasha; edited by Mrs. Hobart. London: Longmans & Co. 1886. Price 7s. 6d.

Augustus Charles Hobart-Hampden, third son of the late Earl of Buckinghamshire, a lineal descendant of John Hampden, whose name he assumed, was born on April 1, 1822. He entered the navy at an early age, and his first experiences were of the rudest. The description of the midshipmen's berth to which he was introduced might be compared with those of 'Midshipman Easy' or 'Peter Simple'; and his captain, though his cousin, is represented as an odious tyrant. Some of the stories told of this man are well-nigh incredible:—

'I have seen,' says Hobart, 'a captain order his steward to be flogged almost to death because his pea-soup was not hot. I have seen an officer from twenty to twenty-five years of age made to stand between two guns, with a sentry over him, for hours, because he had neglected to see and salute the tyrant who had come on deck in the dark.'

Such tyranny is by no means without a parallel; and, as Hobart says he saw it, there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the story. One more extraordinary is this:—

'On one occasion the captain of whom I have been writing invited a friend to breakfast with him, and there being, I suppose, a slight monotony in the conversation, he asked his guest whether he would like, by way of diversion, to see a man flogged. The amusement was accepted, and a man was flogged.'

That the man was flogged may, of course, be admitted; but it is impossible to avoid asking what proof the writer had of the previous circumstances. He does not say that he was one of the party at breakfast: indeed, the inference is that he was not, and that the breakfast was a *tête-à-tête*. The story, though told in evident good faith, appears to be founded on hearsay—possibly on the report of the steward who had neglected to serve the pea-soup hot. In any case, however, it is certain enough that in the early years of the century tyranny was too often mistaken for discipline, and still oftener, perhaps, sprang from a disordered liver, from the irritability engendered by solitude, and from the absence of all official or popular control. The gross forms of tyranny described by Hobart are happily long ago extinct, and the seamen are protected by regulations which the most irritable cannot venture to transgress; but, even now, those behind the scenes hear occasionally of captains whose 'livers' or 'nerves' permit them to exercise a good deal of petty tyranny on officers, who dare not complain, at the risk of getting their names marked at the Admiralty.

On leaving this ship Hobart was appointed to one of the squadron on the coast of Spain under Lord John Hay, and was landed with the naval brigade in support of Queen Christina. It was at the defence of San Sebastian that he received his 'baptism of fire'—with no great credit, if we are to take his confession *au pied de la lettre*.

'The fire,' he says, 'was hot and furious. I candidly admit I was in mortal fear, and when a shell dropped right in the middle of us, and was, I thought, going to burst (as it did), I fell down on my face. Lord John, who was close to me, and looking as cool as a cucumber, gave me a severe kick, saying, "Get up, you cowardly young rascal; are you not ashamed of yourself?" I did get up, and was ashamed of myself. . . . My pride helped me out of the difficulty, and I flinched no more. . . . By degrees all fear left me; I felt only excitement and anger; and when we (a lot I had to do with it!) drove the enemy back in the utmost confusion, wasn't I proud!'

After some six or seven months of this work Hobart was again appointed to a ship on the South American station, and had the good fortune to be with a captain whom he describes as 'in every sense a gentleman,' and under whom he 'began to realise that discipline can be maintained without undue severity, to say nothing of cruelty; and that service in the navy could be made a pleasure, as well as a duty to one's country.' The story of his adventures whilst in this ship—of escapes from sharks, affrays with robbers or murderers, elopements with bewitching *señoritas* or amorous *señoras*, duels with jealous rivals—reads almost like pages from a romance, though here told in all soberness of matter of fact, and including a reference to one little bit of brilliant history,<sup>1</sup> when the allied English and French squadron forced the passage of the Parana at Obligado, and

'Captain (afterwards Admiral Sir James) Hope performed the courageous action which covered him with renown for the rest of his life. The enemy had, amongst other defences, placed a heavy iron chain across the river. This chain it was absolutely necessary to remove, and the gallant officer I refer to, who commanded the attacking squadron, set a splendid example to us all, by dashing forward and cutting with a cold chisel the links of this chain. The whole time he was thus at work he was exposed to a tremendous fire, having two men killed and two wounded out of the six he took with him. This deed, now almost forgotten by the public, can never be effaced from the memory of those who

<sup>1</sup> Hobart has here confused two different commissions. The fight at Obligado was in November 1845, three years after the time to which he refers it.



saw it done. That the fight was a severe one is evident from the fact that the vessel I belonged to had 107 shots in her hull, and 35 out of 70 men killed and wounded.'

The implication that Hope personally cut the chain with a cold chisel is correct only in the sense that *qui facit per alium, facit per se*. The hammer and the chisel were (we believe) actually handled by Mr. George Tuck, then an assistant engineer, and long afterwards, for many years, Instructor in Engineering at the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth and at Greenwich.

On returning to England Hobart was appointed to a ship for the Brazilian station, the special object being the suppression of the slave trade. As a preliminary to writing his sketches, he gave full effect to the Carlyle maxim, and 'cleared his mind of cant'; the reader will find in them none of the conventional claims of the negro to be 'a brudder'—a claim, indeed, which is ever most strongly supported by those whose knowledge of the negro is mainly theoretical. Few who have been thrown much amongst them will go farther than Hobart, who does 'not deny that they have souls to be saved'; but otherwise believes 'that their rôle in this world is to attend on the white man'; that, in fact, they 'are meant to be drawers of water and hewers of wood.' He thinks—and it is difficult for any one but a faddist not to agree with him—that more good would have been done by regulating the traffic in black ivory, than by prohibiting it, with the necessary result that the merchandize was packed with cruel and abominable compactness, so that much of it perished on the voyage, or had to be thrown overboard for want of water, or when chased by an English cruiser. He tells of one schooner he captured with 460 slaves on board.

'She had been,' he says, 'eighty-five days at sea. They were short of water and provisions. Smallpox, ophthalmia, and diarrhoea in its worst form had broken out among the poor doomed wretches. On opening the hold we saw a mass of arms, legs, and bodies, all crushed together. Many of the bodies to whom these limbs belonged were dead or dying—in fact, when we had made some sort of clearance among them, we found in that fearful hold eleven dead bodies lying among the living freight.'

The horrors of this traffic have been often enough expatiated on; but when we pat our sentimental backs, and flatter ourselves that we, as a nation, did so much to put a stop to it, it is worth while remembering that this very acute observer expresses him-

self as 'sceptical of the benefits conferred upon the African race by our blockade.'

Hobart was, however, sent to cruise, not to moralise; and, being entrusted with the command of three boats, he carried out his duty with such ability and with such success, that he speedily became an object for the animosity of the slave-dealing Brazilians. On one occasion, when on shore, he was attacked by two Cuban bloodhounds, whom their master had let slip on him. Fortunately he had his gun with him, and scattered the brains of the leading dog when within five yards of him. This checked the other, and a sailor, who had hastened to the rescue, shot him also. The object of this murderous assault was to enable a vessel, which was daily expected, to run her cargo. Hobart, having escaped from his enemies on shore, succeeded in capturing her with about six hundred slaves on board. 'As they had made a very rapid and prosperous voyage, they were in a somewhat better state than those on board the last capture. Still their state was disgusting enough. Ophthalmia had got a terrible hold of the poor wretches; in many cases the patient was stone-blind.'

After this, Hobart was sent to cruise in company with the boats of another ship, under the orders of a lieutenant whom he here designates A. C. It will not be difficult for those who are curious to fill up the blank; it is enough for us to call attention to the homage which Hobart renders to this officer for 'a gallant act; such,' he says, 'as I have not seen surpassed during forty years of active service.' They had sighted a large brig running in with a fresh breeze. A. C. was in the leading boat, and, attempting to cut her off, got close under her bows and sprang on board. Those in the boat were unable to catch hold, and she went fast astern. A. C. was left alone on the deck. He ran aft, shot the man at the helm, and, taking his place, put the helm down with his leg, whilst with his remaining pistol he kept the crew at bay. The brig was thus thrown up in the wind, was overtaken by the boats, and captured after a short resistance, in which Hobart received a nasty wound in the hand. As to A. C., he says,—

'All the reward he got, beyond the intense admiration of those who saw him, was a bad attack of small-pox from the diseased animals (there is no other name for negroes in the state they were in) on board the slave-vessel, which somewhat injured the face of one of the handsomest men I ever saw. He is now an admiral, has done many gallant acts since then, but none could beat what he did on that memorable morning.'

It was apparently a little after this that Hobart was sent with a prize to Demerara, where he found that the soldier-officers, in attempting to 'withstand the dreadful monotony of doing nothing, had taken to living rather too well,' with the natural consequence that 'many a fine fellow had been carried off by yellow fever.' Warned by their example, Hobart varied the amusement, and fell desperately in love with the Governor's daughter. Now, in Hobart's own words—

'The Governor was a very great swell, a General, a K.C.B., &c., and his daughter was a mighty pretty girl, much run after by the garrison; so it was thought great impertinence on my part, as a humble sub-lieutenant, to presume to make love to the reigning, if not the only beauty in the place. However, audacity carried me on, and I soon became No. 1 in the young lady's estimation. I used to ride with her, spent the evenings in the balcony of Government House with her, sent her flowers every morning, and so on, till at last people began to talk, and steps were taken by her numerous admirers to stop my wild career.'

He was accordingly publicly and grossly insulted by one of his rivals, whom he forthwith called out, 'and the next morning put a ball into his ankle, which prevented him dancing for a long time to come.' He goes on:—

'On returning home after the hostile meeting, I found a much more formidable adversary in the shape of the Governor himself, who was stamping furiously up and down the verandah of my apartment. He received me with, "What the devil do you mean, young sir, by making love to my daughter? You are a mere boy. What means have you got?" After the old gentleman's steam had gone down a little, I replied, "Really, General, I hardly know how to answer you. Your daughter and I are very good friends, the place is most detestably dull, there is nothing to do; and if we amuse ourselves with a little love-making, surely there can be no great harm." This rejoinder of mine made things worse. I thought the old boy would have had a fit. At last he said, "The mail steamer leaves for England to-morrow; you shall go home by her. I order you to do so." I replied that I should please myself and that I was not under his orders. The General went away uttering threats. After he was gone I thought seriously over the matter. I calculated that my income of 120*l.* a year would scarcely suffice to keep a wife, and I decided to renounce my dream of love. I went to pay a farewell visit to my young lady, but found that she was locked up; so away I went, and soon forgot all about it. Shortly afterwards I heard that the Governor's daughter married the man whose leg I had lamed for his impertinence to me.'

Another reminiscence of the same period is more serious. He

had been put in charge of a captured slaver ordered to the Cape of Good Hope for adjudication, and in her were sent the captain and three of his crew as witnesses. The captain was gentlemanly, a good sailor, a first-rate navigator, and before many days were over Hobart struck up a friendship with him, invited him to join his mess, and let him and his men do pretty well what they liked, taking only the precautions to shut them up at night and to sleep with a pistol under his pillow; but, as the weather was hot, he made his bed in a bunk on deck.

'One evening,' he says, 'I retired to my sleeping-place as usual, after having passed a pleasant chatty evening with my prisoner. I was settling myself to sleep—in fact, I think I was asleep as far as it would be called so, for I had from habit the custom of sleeping with one eye open—when I saw, or felt, the flash of a knife over my head. The entrance to my couch was very limited, so that my would-be murderer had some difficulty in striking the fatal blow. Instinct at once showed me my danger. To draw my pistol from under my pillow was the work of a second; to fire it into the body of the man who was trying to stab me, that of another. A groan and a heavy fall on the deck told me what had happened, and springing out of my sleeping-berth I found my friend the captain lying on his face, dead as a door-nail.'

Two of the other prisoners had meantime got on deck and attacked the quartermaster of the watch, who threw one overboard and floored his fellow just as Hobart came to his support. And, without further adventure, they got to the Cape, where Hobart was near being sent to prison on a charge of murder. On his return to England, after this voyage, he was appointed to the royal yacht, and two years later was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. He was afterwards appointed to a ship in the Mediterranean, where he 'passed for several years the usual humdrum life of a naval officer during times of profound peace.'

The crisis of 1848 found him on the coast of Italy, but his sketches are not intended as history, and his personal share in the transactions which rendered the year memorable was but slight. On the outbreak of the Russian war in 1854 he went up the Baltic as first lieutenant of a paddle-wheel steamer, out of which he was shortly afterwards promoted to an acting vacancy. In this position he shared the disgust and distaste which the Commander-in-Chief inspired in every officer in command of a

<sup>1</sup> The social phase of the Mediterranean at this period was amusingly, though with some exaggeration, described by the late Mr. J. Hannay, in a series of sketches under such titles as 'Sand and Shells,' 'Biscuits and Grog,' &c.

ship; but he was not in a position to know much of the secret springs by which the fleet was regulated, and his remarks have no particular value or importance. From the Baltic he was sent, towards the close of the war, to the Mediterranean in command of a gun-vessel, and he seems to have continued on that station for several years, his stay extending into the reign of the admiral whom he here denotes as Sir W. M.

Sir W. M. had the reputation of being the smartest officer in the navy. We would go farther, and say that he was the smartest officer who had held high command in the navy since the days of Lord St. Vincent, to whom he had many points of resemblance. As his rule was an iron one, and the stress of it fell principally on commanding officers, it is not to be wondered at that there were many who were by no means enthusiastic in his praises; but unimpassioned lookers-on were even then aware of the extent and importance of the reforms which he instituted, and could admire and appreciate the manner in which he enforced cleanliness and order in the ships and among the ships' companies, and rendered it possible to walk in the streets of Malta even when the squadron was giving leave. Still, his methods were exact, or even peculiar, and few days passed by without giving currency to some new story, real or imagined, of which the Commander-in-Chief was the hero. Hobart's little misadventure has merely the exceptional merit of being told and guaranteed by one of the principals. The admiral had given orders for all gun-vessels, such as Hobart commanded, to carry on deck a number of water-casks, which he conceived might be used to float the ship off if she got aground. Hobart having, sorely against his will, lumbered his upper deck in this way, had utilised the casks for his own convenience, and quartered his dogs in them, pending the necessity of turning them to account in the way the admiral proposed; and this was the state of things on board the 'F.' when Sir W. M. determined to inspect the ship. Hobart must tell the rest.

The day of my ship's inspection was evidently not one of my lucky days. To begin with, a horrid little monkey belonging to the crew—amusing himself running about in the hammock-nettings near to the gangway over which the great man had to pass—seeing something he thought unusual, made a rush as the commander-in-chief was stepping on board, stooped down, and deliberately took the cocked hat off his head, dropped it into the sea, then started up the rigging chattering with delight at the mischief he had done. The cocked hat was at once

recovered, wiped dry, and placed in its proper place. The admiral, always stern as a matter of principle, looked, after this incident, sterner than usual, hardly recognised me except by a formal bow, then proceeded to muster the officers and crew. This over, he commenced to walk round the deck. I remarked with pleasure his countenance change when he saw how neatly his pet water-casks were painted and lashed to the inner gunnel of the ship. He said quite graciously, 'I am glad to see, Captain Hobart, that you pay such attention to my orders.' I began to think I was mistaken in my idea of the man; but alas for my exuberance of spirits and satisfaction! while the admiral was closely examining one of his pet casks, his face came almost in contact with the opening of the barrel, when, to his and my horror, a pretty little spaniel put out his head and licked the great man on the nose! I shall never forget the admiral's countenance; he turned blue with anger, drew himself up, ordered his boat to be manned, and walked over the side, not saying a word to any one. The admiral hated dogs, hated sport of all kind, and, after what occurred, I fancy hated me. The very next day I was ordered to the coast of Syria: just what I wanted—to be out of the commander-in-chief's way, and to have some good shooting.<sup>1</sup>

In March 1863 Hobart was advanced to post rank; and, having no expectation of present employment, conceived the idea of utilising his involuntary leisure in a manner at once exciting and profitable, and, under the *nom de guerre* of Captain Roberts, accepted the command of a ship built and fitted out to run the blockade of the Confederate States. The adventures of the ship he related shortly afterwards in a little volume entitled 'Never Caught,' much of which is now incorporated with these sketches. If it was excitement which he was mainly in quest of, he certainly got it in a series of extraordinary and hairbreadth escapes from capture or destruction; but rumour was more false than even she generally is, if he did not also win a very handsome pecuniary reward for his labours and risks; and, indeed, he himself says that 'the captain of a blockade-runner could realise in a month a sum as large as the salary of the Governor of Nassau.' This we may the more readily believe, as it appears that the average profit on Hobart's private ventures was something like 1,000 per cent.,

<sup>1</sup> We remember a somewhat similar instance, when Sir W. M., inspecting a line-of-battle ship, and prying too inquisitively into the recesses of a pigeon-hole between the beams on the main deck, found himself face to face with a guinea-pig that had been established there by one of the midshipmen. On another occasion he slipped unexpectedly on board a ship newly come from the Channel Fleet, and went round her decks in grim silence, which he broke only on the gangway, to say to the commanding officer, 'Your decks are dirty and your hammocks are badly stowed. Good morning.'



independent of the very liberal pay from the owners, whose whole cargo was bringing in a similar profit.

It would be unreasonable to suppose that Hobart, in entering on this service, was not mainly guided by pecuniary considerations, although his predilections were unquestionably in favour of the Confederates, whom he favoured both as maintaining the right of the white man to be free and of the black man to be a slave. Had he been a rich man he might have fought for them: being a poor man, he combined principle and profit, and ran the blockade for them. His merit is not that what he did was mainly for his pecuniary advantage, but that what he undertook to do he did remarkably well; and that in the full stringency of the blockade he successfully made six round trips in and out of Wilmington. Hobart modestly attributes much of this success to luck; but a man of ability, nerve, and ready wit has a way of compelling luck, which goes far to take from it the element of chance. How much of these qualities Hobart was master of appears from almost every page of his narrative, of which the following account of a run into Wilmington may be taken as a sample:—

On our nearing the blockading squadron at nightfall we heard a great deal of firing going on inshore, which we conjectured (rightly, as it afterwards appeared) was caused by the American ships, who were chasing and severely handling a blockade-runner. An idea at once struck me, which I quickly put into execution. We steamed in as fast as we could, and soon made out a vessel ahead that was hurrying in to help her consorts to capture or destroy the contraband. We kept close astern of her, and in this position followed the cruiser several miles. Suddenly the firing ceased, and our pioneer turned out to sea again. As we were by this time very near inshore, we stopped the engines and remained quite still, but unluckily could not make out our exact position. The blockading cruisers were evidently very close in, so we did not like moving about; besides, the pilot was confident that we were close enough to the entrance of the river to enable us to run in when day broke without being in any danger from the enemy. Thus for the remainder of the night we lay quite close to the beach.

And the next day they got in, though not without some further difficulty.

After having made his six successful trips, Hobart gave up his command and returned to England, where the first news he got, as he landed at Southampton, was of the capture of his old ship, whose luck had broken down under her new commander. Having now leisure, and perhaps also some spare cash, Hobart resolved to travel for a year on the Continent; and in the course of his wanderings came to Constantinople. He had letters of introduc-

tion to the Grand Vizier, Fuad Pasha, on whom he accordingly called. It was the time of the rebellion in Crete, and the conversation turned on the systematic running of the Turkish blockade of the island by Greek vessels. Hobart thought it could be stopped without much difficulty, and the next day was invited to take service under the Ottoman Government. Hobart considered for a short time, and answered, 'Well, your Highness, I am ready, if the terms offered me are satisfactory.' They proved 'most satisfactory,' and he accepted. The engagement was for five years, but was renewed and renewed, and was still in force at the time of his death.

He was at once sent to Crete to put a stop to the blockade-running. On arriving on his station he found that the Turkish officers, in their ignorance of international law, had permitted themselves to be hoaxed with various newly coined regulations, which practically rendered the blockade nugatory. He found also that the revolt was entirely fostered by Greek intrigue, and was dependent on Greek support; 'that if the blockade-running was stopped, the insurgents would at once lay down their arms for want of food and warlike stores.' He determined to put a stop to it, and with a small selected squadron left Suda Bay as though on a cruise, and when out of sight steamed straight for Syra, 'the principal delinquent in fitting out and sending blockade-runners to Crete.' Circumstances alter cases: to look for blockade-runners near their starting-point at Syra seemed most fitting: a short time before, the action of the Americans in cruising near the Bahamas seemed most questionable. By the next morning he was off Syra, and, as day broke, sighted 'a regular blockade-runner' about a mile to seaward. On a blank gun being fired, to bring her to, she answered with a shotted Armstrong, cutting away the stanchion of the bridge on which Hobart was standing. The vessel made good her run into Syra, keeping up a running fight with two Turkish despatch-boats; but Hobart was quite satisfied, knowing that the chase had been guilty of piracy, and had given him a legal pretext for laying an embargo on all the shipping of the port. The position was thus reversed: Syra was closely blockaded; and 'within three days, no blockade-runners arriving at Crete, the insurgents laid down their arms and begged for bread.'

On his return to Constantinople Hobart was specially well received, not only by the Sultan, who promoted him to the rank of full Admiral, but by the representatives of the European

Powers. England alone stood aloof. 'The Admiralty,' he says, 'went so far as to tell me that if I did not immediately return, my name would be erased from the list of naval officers. An officer of high rank, a member of the Board of Admiralty, wrote to me a semi-official letter, in which he said: "Unless you leave the Turkish service, you will be scratched off the list." Feeling exceedingly hurt at such treatment . . . I wrote to him: "You may scratch, and be damned." This letter was, I think, very unfairly quoted against me some time afterwards in the House of Commons. However, my name was erased from the list of naval officers, and was not replaced there for several years.'<sup>1</sup>

It was with the Russian war of 1877 that Hobart's name first became generally known, and the story of his career at that time would be a history of the naval side of the war, which our limits do not permit us to undertake. In these sketches he has merely glanced at some of his adventurous achievements, the relations of which are still too long to quote—too detailed to abstract. It is perhaps of more real interest to note that, in his opinion, the war, as a war of invasion, might have been prevented if the Turkish naval force had been properly utilised.<sup>2</sup> What he says is this:—

Some few days before the war broke out I was sent to examine the Danube from a professional point of view; and it was soon made clear to me that much could be done in the way of defending that great estuary had nautical experience and the splendid material of which the Turkish sailor is made of been properly utilised. But I found that pig-headed obstinacy and the grossest ignorance prevailed in the councils of those who had supreme command in that river. I found that my advice, and that of competent Turkish officers, was entirely ignored; and that few, if any, proper steps were taken to prevent the enemy's progress into Roumania, and, later on, his passing the Danube almost unopposed. On the day that war was declared, I was at Rustchuk, the headquarters of the Turkish army. On that occasion I made a final effort, by making propositions which events have proved would have arrested the advance of the enemy. I was simply told to mind my own business, and ordered to immediately rejoin my ships, which were at the moment lying at the Sulina mouth of the Danube.

J. K. LAUGHTON.

<sup>1</sup> Hobart is here, as before, confusing dates. His name was not erased from the navy list till after the outbreak of the Russian war, nine or ten years later than the time he is here speaking of.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Dundonald (with whose career we have already compared Hobart's) held very similar views as to the possibility of preventing the Peninsular War.

## *A Modest Defence of the Royal Academy.*

‘**L**OOK here; we’re going to do for them at last,’ cried my friend, Mr. Richard Tinto, bursting into the study where I was striving with a sonnet.

‘Them? Who? Oh, the Academy, I suppose?’ I replied.

‘Yes, sir, we shall bring them down on their old knees,’ cried Dick, tossing me a paper. ‘You see they *will* be had. Hunt is on them, and Crane, and Clausen.’

I read the document Dick offered me; it was the celebrated manifesto of these famous painters, with their proposal for a rival show.

‘But how is the thing to work?’ I asked. ‘The Academy has got the rooms, and got the men, and got the money too. How are you to draw the public to Mr. Hunt’s new National show? If they want to see Mr. Hunt’s pictures they can go to Bond Street, though I’m sure the Academy would have been only too proud to exhibit his “Innocents Abr——” I mean his “Holy Innocents.”’

‘Likely that he’d let them!’ said Dick.

‘Well, but he may not get on much better with the new opposition affair. Then the public knows where the Walter Cranes are—at the Grosvenor, of course. I daresay Mr. Clausen exhibits there too. But the public wants to see Millais, and Leighton, and Tadema, and Herkomer, and Leader, and Vicat Cole, and Colin Hunter, and MacWhirter, and Orchardson, and Pettie——’

‘Confounded crew,’ interrupted Dick, very rudely.

‘*Chacun à son goût*, my boy, but that is the public *goût*, and when it gets *that* for its shilling, and plenty more, why it won’t patronise your opposition, Mr. Crane and all. Besides, where’s your money? You ask people to guarantee it, but the public is content, the swell artists are content, and I don’t see where the tin is to come from for a rival establishment.

‘Oh, you throw cold water on everything!’ cried Dick.

‘Under such showers,’ I said, ‘the bud of genius blossoms into the flowers of prosperity.’

But he was gone!

After Dick left me I began to think about the Royal Academy, and the artists, and the public, an old worn topic, but one that keeps ‘returning like the peewit.’

The Royal Academy, like tall hats, the Bench of Bishops, tips to railway porters, the House of Lords, and many other institutions is constantly on its trial. *Multi sunt qui persequuntur me*, the Academy might say, and in the person of some of its members it has lifted up its voice against them. I would deprecate, if accents so modest could win a hearing, the disendowment and disestablishment of the Royal Academy. When Dean Swift ventured to publish some reasons for not instantly abolishing the Christian Religion, he showed that persons of wit and humour would be deprived, by such inconsiderate action, of a serviceable and perennial butt. The Academy supplies unsuccessful artists with the same constant and comfortable object of attack, and I conceive that if the Academy falls, the British public itself will be in considerable danger. As things at present exist, when Mr. Richard Tinto does not sell his performances, he simply devotes his leisure to reviling the Forty. He taunts them with jealousy, stupidity, respectability, success, opulence, tuft-hunting, Philistinism. He caricatures them; he writes letters about them to the papers; in all societies, and especially over his pipe and whisky-and-water, he raises up his voice against the blinded, miserable men who don’t make him the very thing he despises—an R.A. By this course of conduct Richard becomes a weariness to the somewhat large majority of human beings who are either Academicians themselves or are not artists of any description. When one meets Tinto, life turns into a game of hide-and-seek. Your whole interest is bent on evading the subject of the Royal Academy. You would rather talk of the Royal Family itself, though *that* leads him straight to the Prince of Wales and the Academy dinner. You guide the discourse in the direction of Newmarket and the Cambridgeshire, but *that* reminds him that Mr. Frith once painted ‘The Derby Day,’ and off he goes on the vulgarity and popularity-hunting of the Academy. You speak of poetry, but from the sorrow of Chatterton he glides, by an easy transition, to all the martyrdoms of which the Academy has been guilty, to all the glorious outsiders who perished in their pride owing to Academic cruelty. In fact Dick’s talk is a perpetual prose ‘Adonais,’ in which the

Academy takes the unattractive rôle of the *Quarterly Review*, as denounced by Shelley. The very private characters and talents of the Academicians do not escape the wrath of Dick Tinto, though in other matters he is far from being Pharisaical. He derides their dinner parties, he has anecdotes about their blameless models, he believes in Ghosts which haunt their studios. And yet he lives in a constant surprise—the innocent Richard—that the Academy does not elect him at each new vacancy. As if constant abuse of a club and its members were the way to avoid blackballs!

The invectives of Tinto (he is an *impressioniste* himself, and complains that there are no *impressionistes* in the Forty)—the invectives of Tinto have often made me regard the Academy as an invaluable institution. It answers to the 'buffer states,' which we read of in modern political discussions. Bulgaria is, or lately was, a buffer state, or, rather, artificial commonwealth between two jealous Powers. A buffer state is likely to have plenty of history, and not to be over happy. In the same way the Academy acts as a buffer between the Wrath of Tinto and the general public. Even if there were no Royal Academy, Tinto would not be a success. The public does not care for *impressionisme*, and, above all, does not care for the performance of Dick Tinto. That is not his fault, nor theirs, but merely the fault of the nature of things. He is an ingenious artist, the public is a good public, but there is no 'pre-established harmony' between them. They are fated not to suit each other. Now Tinto and his friends are pleased to lay the blame of this on the Academy, and against the Academy he directs the arrows of his tongue. Were there no Academy, he would simply turn round and revile the dull Philistine public, you and me, Tom, Dick, and Harry—all of us! I know he would, because, to be open with the reader, we all do it, *nous autres*, we poets and novelists. There is, thank goodness, no Royal Academy of Letters. If there were, each of us failures would perpetually gnash his teeth against that harmless and dignified body of men. I have often seen, in my mind's eye, the Royal Academy of Letters. The Duke of Argyll would be a member, so would Mr. Lecky, Archdeacon Farrar, Professor Huxley, Mr. Herbert Spencer, Mr. Edmund Yates, Mr. Matthew Arnold, Mr. Burnand, Mr. W. S. Gilbert, the Bishop of Peterborough, Mr. James Knowles, Lord Tennyson, Canon Liddon, and the Author of 'John Inglesant, Gentleman.' How we would rate the R. A. L., we others; how we would defy and denounce it, and long, and yearn, and intrigue to become



members! When our books did not sell, when the public neglected our lyrics, and never looked at our novels, how we would blame the Royal Academy of Letters! Now, as there is no such academy, we have nobody to blame but the critics, a little, and the public, 'this great stupid public,' as Mr. Thackeray called it. Perhaps a very few of us blame ourselves and frankly acknowledge that we are not very witty, nor very learned, nor very imaginative, and that if we are failures, it is merely because there is no particular reason why we should succeed. The artist in oils, or water-colours, or clay, or *niello*, or what not, has a safety valve we lack. He does not blame the public, he does not lay the fault on himself—far from it—he simply execrates the confounded Academy. Thus, as a butt, a safety valve, a flattering unction to self-esteem, the Academy is simply invaluable, and to boycott, or disestablish, or otherwise get rid of the Academy, would be to deprive artists of pleasures which they would sadly miss. It is just the same in France with their more glorious and ancient Academy. The literary men ridicule the *Forty*, despise them, fight with them as the Apostle fought with beasts, fawn on them, intrigue with them, and sometimes, like Balzac and Théophile Gautier, are left outside after all.

This is all very well, it may be said, as an ironical view of the matter. But the view is even, to a certain extent, correct. The mere existence of the Academy gives an extraordinary, though often painful and bitter, interest to the painter's career. In the Academy, to tell a truth which many artists do not seem to suspect, and which is the best Apology for the institution, there is really nothing but a concentrated Public. The *Forty*, electing themselves, are necessarily biassed by all sorts of personal and social considerations, and prefer, very properly, a good fellow to a 'gruncher.' Yet they succeed, after all, in being almost perfect representatives of the British Public, and its tastes and likings. Of late some artists have got up, as we have seen, an agitation against the Academy, and their complaint is, to some extent, that the Academy stands between the public and them. The Academy is the great recognised Art Shop of this country, marked (like Crown Derby) with the valuable Royal Trade-mark. To have a good place always in Burlington House is to reach the purchasing and praising public. Not to have that place is often (not always) to miss the purchasing public. Therefore, when that place is denied to an artist he naturally decides that the Academy comes between him and the world—between him and his daily bread. Such a belief,

when sincerely held, is almost maddening. Happily, as I have said, in the profession of letters, no author's life can be poisoned by this hatred of a middleman. We all appeal straight to the world, and if we do not succeed, either our own incompetence, or the general taste, or bad luck, is to blame. But the artist thinks the Academy is to blame. He is not so right as he supposes. The Academy does not come so much as he thinks between him and the public. The Academy *is* the public. On the whole its judgments exactly coincide with the general taste—with the view of *le moyen homme artistique*. The Academy would in vain hang the works of our unpopular talent in the best places. The Academy does not do so, because it is so representative of the average multitude. But, even if it did so, the Academy could not win the average multitude to admire the unpopular talent. The Academy cannot lead taste, and yet one of the chief complaints is that it does not lead—that it is slow to recognise new genius.

Without mentioning names one may give an example. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, last summer, offered prizes for the persons who should best represent the average taste of the average Briton. Among the questions set was the task of naming the best landscape of the year. About a dozen were named, and among them were neither of the landscapes which a refined and critical taste would probably have preferred. These paintings did not receive a single vote. One of them was well hung, the other was badly hung, but it is certain that neither had the qualities which catch the general eye and please the majority. The truth seems to be that the kind of talent, or genius, which does not suit the Academy, or wins the Academy very slowly, does not suit the public; or, like spring in the North, 'comes slowly up that way.'

There are men of great genius in art, and (more rarely) in literature, who fail to please the multitude of their contemporaries. Millet, in France, is a notorious example. A failure with the public, he was also no success in the Salon, though the Salon is organised and governed in a manner much more popular and less exclusive than our Academy. The public must be educated into liking, or pretending to like, such a talent. Now, to educate the public thus is not the function of an Academy, or of the Salon; it is the function of critics and amateurs.

The natural public taste is for Mr. Frith and M. Bouguereau; it is not for Millet, or Rodin, or Mr. Gilbert, or Mr. Burne Jones. An Academy, as, after all, a representative institution, follows, or but by a pace or two precedes, public opinion. Every original

talent must be novel, surprising, even *bizarre*. Most members of the general public must stare and laugh at art with these qualities. Every Academy of prosperous middle-aged conventional artists must dislike what rises against their canons. I am surprised at the chances which the Academy gave young Mr. Millais in the old Preraphaelite days. I am surprised they did not mark his works with 'a big, big D,' and reject them. It is not the tardiness of the Academy in admitting genius that amazes me, but their ultimate surrender of the citadel, their opening of the gates to the young conqueror. Is Theology so ready to receive what is new—is Science, or is Literature? Had Darwin at once an unopposed success, or even Carlyle, or Lord Tennyson, or Mr. Browning?

This tardiness, this reluctance to admit *novæ res*, to make concession to revolution, is not such a very bad thing, as every constitutional politician will allow. An Academy which shifted with every wind of *impressionisme*, would be a very useless institution. New ideas, new methods, need, like Byron, 'something craggy to wreak their minds on.' The Academy is pretty craggy. If an original artist can conquer the Academy, there must be some real merit in him, some power of persistence.

So far this may have been a kind of defence of the Academy. But that institution necessarily has the defects of its qualities. It is a close corporation. It has a sort of monopoly. True, there are other exhibitions of every grade; how many the critic knows as he pads the weary hoof in Bond Street, or, as the Rig Veda says, 'perhaps even *he* knows not.' True, an artist of courage and power can dispense with the Academy. Mr. Rossetti, Mr. Burne Jones, and others have won fame, and even some fortune, with no help from the Academy. The Grosvenor Gallery has been of great service; the Suffolk Street Gallery is not without its merits; Mr. Whistler can take very good care of himself. I do not believe that an artist of merit can be 'crushed by the Academy,' as people say, though he would make a better income more easily if he were an Academician. Still, the Academy is a close corporation, and has a monopoly. What does it do with all the shillings it collects? This is a great mystery, even an Apologist must admit; and a Royal Commission might laudably investigate a branch of knowledge so interesting and so obscure.

Once more, the Academy is, I have argued, only the public 'writ small,' and it is, therefore, of a spirit far too commonplace,

commercial, inartistic. Who can deny that many of its members paint pictures which are mere commercial speculations? There is no way of preventing that. There is no method by which the Academy can be brought to prefer art that is delicate, refined, spiritual, that has sentiment and poetry, to art that is slapdash and full of false and hasty emphasis. I know not why it is that the Scotch school of landscape should often lay on its hues so thick, and with so heavy a hand. There are exceptions, and yet this school, so favoured and successful in the Academy, seems to me (for one) to have a plentiful lack of delicacy, of poetry, of taste, and therefore of permanent merit. Scotch landscape often reminds me of Scotch pulpit eloquence: it is sturdy, copious, rich; has plenty of body, plenty of noise and rhetoric, but Dr. Chalmers is not in the same kingdom of art as Massillon. Yet, even in preferring this art, the Academy represents the public. What is a popular preacher? What are his merits? Is he not often pretentious, blatant; does he not force the note; is not his colour gaudy and his style Corinthian? Yet he is popular. The people 'will have it so'; and so a kind of painting is popular which cannot live nor last, which will not bear to be filtered through the judgments of amateurs and critics. It is popular, and the Academy (being popular itself, after all) gives it ample space and honour.

The Academy could not live and flourish if it did not meet the taste of the general. The taste of the general will never delight in art that is wholly novel and original. For this reason all attempts to upset the Academy, as in the schemes of Mr. Holman Hunt and Mr. Walter Crane, must fail. These schemes depend on raising large sums of money, as all schemes must when war is to be levied on the opulent. Whence is the money to come? Not from the public, the public likes the art the Academy gives it, and likes it the better the more commonplace it is in character and the more obvious in its appeal. It likes pictures of pointers breaking into the luncheon-basket on the moors, pictures of babies, pictures of bishops, pictures of fox-terriers fishing for perch. The public, happily, can also appreciate the downright mastery of Sir John Millais, and the extraordinary craftsmanship of Mr. Alma Tadema, concerning which, Blake (in a spirit of prophecy) wrote a very rude epigram. As the public gets all it really wants from the Academy, it will not subscribe very freely to an association for giving it (to be plain) what it does not want at all. Artists already successful will not be of a more subscribing humour, artists who are not successful cannot

provide the sinews of war. No, unless legislation interfere, the Academy holds the field and is safe enough from the malcontents.

Probably legislation should interfere with some Academic privileges. Even the Academy falls short of ideal perfection. Certain peculiarities of the Academy are notorious. The privilege of hanging eight pictures on the line enables senile Academicians to cover the walls with vast and portentous canvases. Last summer the space occupied by Academic foibles, not always excused by old age, was rather too large. The national show was a thing to smile upon. Acres of wall were covered with designs from which a friendly writer must avert his gaze. Like the Recording Angel, I drop a tear on the Catalogue.

To mention names is superfluous, would be invidious, and might be dangerous. It is certain that the privileges of Academicians must be limited in the interests of fair play and national art. It is more difficult to see how Academicians, as yet by no means well stricken in years, are to be prevented from exhibiting canvases which would be justly rejected (but for the artist's name) at any minor gallery in London. The Academy may pass a self-denying ordinance, as the President and its best members are known to wish to do, otherwise restraint must come from without. The character of some of the pictures bought with the funds of the Chantrey Bequest is also a marvel to the perplexed race of man. Perhaps they are purchased with the benevolent purpose of hiding them for ever from human view. This, at least, is a charitable suggestion.

The Academy is far too exclusively devoted to the interests of painters in oils. The truly English and beautiful art of water-colour drawing should entitle a worthy artist to election, even if he never touches oils at all. There should be room for men at once so able and so popular as Leech, Cruikshank, and Du Maurier; in fact, room for all the plastic arts in due proportion to their gravity, excellence, and endurance. The question of teaching is a separate question, and requires a separate discussion by experts. Meanwhile, with all her faults, do not let us attack the Academy as if she were a 'haggard and heartless haridan,' as Mr. Swinburne might say. Our best men, our greatest glories, have belonged to her—Reynolds, and Turner, Millais, and Leighton, and Landseer. If Gainsborough quarrelled with her, let us remember the reconciliation of his dying words, 'We are all going up to Heaven together.' All true artists are united, after all, by something higher than an interest in having so many

places on the line. There have been men—Blake and Rossetti, for example—who were probably better outside of an Academy. Every good artist, and true, can do without her; most of those who revile her would in no case win contemporary success, many of them would fail utterly, Academy or no Academy. Were I to advise a young painter I would counsel him to abandon his profession for some more profitable field of usefulness. Times are hard, trade is bad, to do without modern pictures is an easy economy. I confess that, even if I were a millionaire, I could deny myself examples of modern English art. But if my young friend persisted in his Vocation, I would urge him to paint his best, to study his hardest, and never to give a moment's thought to the Academy. The mere existence of the Academy so embitters many painters whose spleen would otherwise find no point on which to concentrate itself, that entire indifference and independence is the only safe path for the young artist. If he keeps worrying about the Academy, about success, he can no more be happy than a pretty girl who should incessantly distress herself with the desire to get invited to Marlborough House. Not Marlborough House, nor Burlington House, but sound work and a kindly life and ways are the true goal of art, as of the beauty for which art is a constant expression of our gratitude to Heaven. I am not a professional painter, but I can quote a painter to this effect. Mr. Alfred Stevens writes: '*Il faudrait avoir le courage de ne se préoccuper ni des succès de Salon, ni de l'opinion de la presse, ni de l'éventualité des récompenses, et ne s'inquiéter que de se contenter soi-même.*'



### *Love's Silence.*

SWEET, shall I ask thee why thou art so still,  
 Gazing afar into the deeps of space,  
 With shadows of the twilight on thy face,  
 And eyes that quick with dewy moisture fill?  
 Why is thy laughter's mellow rippling rill  
 Silent and dumb? What chrism of perfect grace  
 Shall fall upon those lips and find a place  
 To bid their accents on the dusk to thrill?  
 Why art thou voiceless, love? Ah, speak to me  
 With speech that ever into music grows.  
 She turns her eyes, that hold me in their thrall,  
 As dark and sweet as night upon the sea,  
 Saying, while one swift look upon me glows,  
 'Love is unutterable and is all.'

W. J. HENDERSON.

## *An English Vendetta.*

‘GIVE me half the fortune your father made out of my brains, and I’ll hear you.’

‘I don’t understand this. Did you not accept 5,000*l.* for your invention? In fact, sir, I have seen letters of enthusiastic gratitude which you addressed to Sir Philip at the time. Do you mean that they are forgeries?’

‘I didn’t know the value of my discovery; your father did, and he bought for that wretched sum an invention that has earned him half a million. I say that I’ll have no help from you, Frederick Staymer. If I can hurt your father no other way, I’ll starve, and my death will avenge me!’

‘I cannot argue with this spirit, Mr. Keeley, and, if you alone were concerned, I should say no more. But you have a little daughter, I understand?’

‘Don’t think of me, father! If you took a morsel of dry bread from them, it would choke me.’

Young Staymer turned in astonishment: he thought they two were alone in the miserable room. Upright by the window stood a slender girl, whose large eyes burned and thin lips quivered with passionate excitement. He crossed the narrow floor, and seated himself on the small bed beside her.

‘My child,’ said he, ‘you are terribly prejudiced against us. Do I look a villain?’

‘No,’ she answered sullenly, ‘but you come from your father.’

‘Ay,’ cried the sick man, ‘and go back to him! Tell him what you’ve seen. Give him my daughter’s answer: if we took a morsel of dry bread from you or yours, it would choke us.’

‘Have you no kinder word?’ Frederick asked of the girl.

She did not answer.

‘Then I will leave you, Mr. Keeley,’ he said, rising. ‘Five thousand pounds will be deposited this afternoon at the Bank of England in your name and this young lady’s, if you will give it me—to be hers in case of your death.’

‘I refuse the name.’

'Well, probably I can do without it. But mark me, sir, this is no restitution, no acknowledgment of a claim. Sir Philip gives it in remembrance of his former association with you, as a sign of respect for your great abilities and your ill-success in life.'

'And I throw it back,' the dying man cried, rising, gaunt and ragged, on his mattress, eyes aflame and thin cheeks lit with the glow of fever. 'I throw it back in his teeth—I wish it were five thousand pounds weight in gold! Have I asked anything from you or yours? I scorn you too deeply, I know you too well, and my wrongs are too bitter! I accept no restitution in this world, Frederick Staymer, lest it should be placed to your father's credit on high, and spare him one pang of the vengeance which a just heaven will exact. Amen!'

'Good-bye, little girl! You know my name, and my address is easily found always. Remember that a fortune is waiting you at the Bank of England from this day. It would be useless to say more to you, Mr. Keeley, but I wish you well.'

When Staymer had gone, the child came across and kissed her father, nestling to him; but they did not speak for a long while.

'I have done wrong, Amy.'

'No, no!'

'Ay, I have, pet. It's a small thing for a man to be brave and firm when he is doomed. But I should have thought of my daughter, as he said. A fraction of the sum which is my right would be comfort and happiness to you. I've ruined your life with my obstinacy.'

'Don't imagine such a thing, father. What I said to the young man is truth—their money would choke me!'

'Ah! I began the mischief long since. Heaven forgive me! It's sad that a child of your age should know the wickedness of men, and cherish bitter feelings. But the money is there, safe in the Bank of England. When I'm gone, darling, your aunt will take you to claim it. I think she's honest, but trust no lawyer—don't trust her too far.'

'Father, I——'

'I am tired, Amy. Kiss me now, and let me sleep till Jane comes. It will be wearisome to explain to her, and this excitement has disturbed me terribly.'

A long kiss they exchanged, and the girl left him. She withdrew to her book at the window, and read till the light failed; then dropped asleep.

The opening of the door aroused her. 'Is that you, Aunt Jane? Father's dozing,' she whispered.

'I can feel my way,' a voice replied; 'don't move.' But the next moment a chair fell crash.

'It's nothing, father,' Amy cried. 'Aunt Jane's come.'

But there was no answer, and in breathless alarm she struck a match.

The sick man lay still. Amy ran to him.

'Oh! Aunt, aunt, come!' In the darkness they leaned over him.

'My poor little girl, he's out of his troubles now,' Mrs. Dermot said with rough tenderness. 'I'll be a mother to you, so far as my poor means go.'

It is needless to describe the scene. That night Amy was taken to her aunt's lodging, crowded with children already. Three days afterwards she attended her father's funeral.

When Sir Philip Staymer heard his son's report, softened though it was, he fell into a passion.

'I gave you my word, Fred, and I don't withdraw from it. There is the cheque! But I knew how it would be. Keeley is a malignant fool, and always was. Did you show him his own letter in answer to this raving?'

'He is in no condition to argue. It's enough that our conscience is clear, sir, and that you can justify every part of your conduct if summoned.'

'But I'm sorry you didn't read him the letter which says that he had tried every means to launch his invention, and would hand it over to me *in toto* for a thousand pounds. With that offer before me, Fred, I gave the fellow five thousand, and now he declares I swindled him.'

'I know the truth, but that was a reason for not pressing it.'

'Well, take your cheque at once, or I may repent—the ungrateful ass!'

'I have it safe, sir,' Fred answered, laughing. 'Did you know Keeley had a daughter?'

'I know nothing about his affairs. How old is she?'

'Very much too young to justify the suspicion which I see in your look, sir. A very pretty child of ten or thereabouts, and even more interesting than pretty. I should like to feel that she was provided for, independent of her father.'

'What! The settlement I have made is more than enough—five thousand pounds more than enough. One can see, young fellow, that you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth. When you have earned as much money as that, you won't listen as patiently as I do to a proposal for giving it away.'

'But look at my notion, sir. The settlement arranged is cash out of your pocket. I only ask you to make me an advance—capitalising two hundred a year out of the sum you kindly allow me.'

'How much is that?'

'A thousand, I believe, sir.'

'I give you credit for an honest belief to that effect. But I had occasion to look through your accounts the other day, and I find that in the three years since you came of age I have paid, one way or another, very nearly seven thousand for you.'

'Bless my soul!'

'I will show the figures. You see, it's a monstrous absurdity to talk of deducting two hundred from your allowance. Besides, Fred, one should be reasonable in charity. I must refuse to do anything more.'

The young man did not press his point. Conscious that even the large sum mentioned had gone in pocket-money and defraying current debts, he was glad to drop the subject. This revelation astonished and shocked him. He resolved to ascertain his liabilities, to pay them off gradually and to incur no more. But this determination applied to the future: for the present, Fred had no idea of abandoning his notion. He knew very well how to raise money, and within the week an additional five thousand was paid into the Bank of England for the sole benefit of James Keeley's daughter.

It was characteristic of the boy that Fred made no further inquiries. Returning from the Bank on foot, he met a very humble funeral, and, in the sympathetic fashion learned abroad, lifted his hat carelessly. He did not look at the cab which followed that poor hearse. But a child therein saw him, and marked the unusual action. To her it seemed a mockery of the dead, a last insult of malice and wrongdoing towards its victim. Against her will she had cherished a kindly sentiment towards Fred Staymer since that terrible day. It vanished. Amy was glad to think she had kept her secret, and no one knew the fortune lying in her name at the Bank of England.

In the years that followed these two lived as fate and circumstances decreed. Staymer's regiment was ordered to India; it was a chance of recovery from financial disasters and expensive habits, and Fred wished to profit by it. But Sir Philip, growing more feeble daily, could not bear to part with his son, and he exchanged into the wealthiest and most desperate corps of plungers of the British service.

Amy passed four years with Mrs. Dermot, who kept a very small and very miscellaneous shop in a back street at Clapham. She looked after the children, and did more than her share of the housework, as the unchivalrous customs of woman exact from a girl-relative sheltered in charity. Upon occasion she served behind the counter, and by degrees the lending library which formed part of Mrs. Dermot's business fell under her direction.

James Keeley had left very little in the way of furniture which his sister thought worth removal, but a number of old and stupid volumes she took away simply as 'dummies' to fill her shelves. The child did not protest, though her young sense of justice was outraged. Two years afterwards Mrs. Dermot found an opportunity to buy a cargo of novels very cheap, and then she offered those unmarketable books at the rag-and-bone shop of the neighbourhood. Fortunately, the unlearned dealer was not anxious to close, and Amy heard the proposal in time.

To urge sentimental associations after the lapse of so many months would have been futile; she simply represented that her father believed his volumes to be worth money, and obtained permission, after much trouble, to put some of them among the toys and sweets in the window. Mrs. Dermot submitted impatiently, and day by day, as no purchaser came forward, she declared with growing vehemence that they should be sold for waste paper. Kind-hearted in her fashion, however, and just a little hopeful to the last that something might turn up, the good woman waited still, vowing every night that the rubbish should be cleared away; but every morning action was postponed. So it chanced that the opportunity came at length, and the man of destiny appeared.

He was not a romantic personage at all. For some days Amy had noticed a shabby veteran who lingered at the window. Presently he entered to ask the price of a duodecimo; in a tumult of hope and fear she named half-a-crown. 'Ridiculous!' exclaimed the veteran, and marched out. Amy did not dare to tell this incident. She bitterly reproached herself for fixing the price so high; but when, two days afterwards, the stranger returned, she was shrewd enough to draw a conclusion.

'Well, my dear, have you thought it over?'

'Yes, sir. I made a mistake. That little volume is five shillings.'

The old gentleman showed a frank amusement. He sat down, laughing.

'Now tell the truth, my child. I hope you always tell the truth?'



‘I hope so, sir.’

‘What is the real price you are told to ask for that book?’

‘I am not told to ask any price at all. I guess.’

‘Oh, sharp little girl! How did your mother get them?’

‘My mother is dead, sir, and they belonged to my father, and Mrs. Dermot is going to sell them for waste-paper—with his name in them too—to be torn up!’

‘Well, well, child, they sha’n’t be torn up.’

At this moment Mrs. Dermot appeared.

‘I am trying to strike a bargain for these old books, ma’am. What do you ask?’

‘A pound apiece, aunt!’ Amy cried.

‘A pound apiece! You must excuse this little girl, sir, please. She’s not clever.’ Mrs. Dermot was observing his expression, and did not know what to make of it. ‘Not a pound apiece,’ she continued, doubtfully; ‘I’d say—I’d say two-pounds-ten for the lot.’

‘Here it is, ma’am,’ the old gentleman replied, with a merry look at Amy. ‘You needn’t give me a receipt. Twenty-four volumes—I know them all. I’ll send my servant immediately to carry them away. Now, I don’t agree with you that this young lady is not clever, and I back my opinion by making her a present of two-pounds-ten for her share of her father’s property—for herself, ma’am, you understand. Good-bye, little girl! I shall come to see you occasionally.’

The servant, who arrived in a cab, haughtily informed Mrs. Dermot that his master was very rich, a widower with one child, and a great scholar. Nearly every day for some weeks he visited the shop, buying all sorts of rubbish, and chatting with Amy. Then he vanished for two years; but on his return the visits recommenced, and Mrs. Dermot began to think there was some purpose in them. Amy had greater reason to suspect the same thing.

At length it was declared. Mr. Thomas announced his name, and asked a private interview with the aunt.

‘I have a daughter, ma’am,’ he began, ‘about the age of Miss Amy. She is not very bright, but very gentle and loving, and she is heiress to a great fortune. Various circumstances make it awkward for me to provide her with the amusements and companionship which are still more necessary because, as I have said, my Louisa has not the resources in herself which other children enjoy. Now it has occurred to me that if you would permit your little niece to bear my child company, it might be advantageous

to everybody concerned. Let us try it for a month, she spending the day at my house and returning here to sleep. I should add that the girls will be treated quite alike, share the same lessons, and wear the same dress, if you do not object.'

A pang of maternal envy shot through Mrs. Dermot's bosom. Why was not this chance offered to one of her own many daughters? But the unworthy feeling did not last. The same afternoon she paid a visit to Mr. Thomas, saw his pretty child, formed a high opinion of the housekeeper, and came to terms. At the end of the month's trial a definite engagement was concluded, and Amy went to live, for a time unfixed, in the big beautiful house on Clapham Common.

Her young mistress—though there was no hint of such relationship between them—proved to be emphatically a 'sweet girl,' lovely of face, pure and affectionate, but weak of brain. The mischief did not go beyond weakness.

With friends Louisa showed a spirit, simple always and easily dashed, but almost merry; towards strangers in all likelihood she would never be otherwise than submissive and distrustful of herself to a degree which might well cause a parent anxiety.

Mr. Thomas had married the sister of Sir Philip Staymer, and with certain branches of that family he kept up a close acquaintance. Amy did not learn this fact, as it chanced, until the arrangement was completed. She resolutely proposed to break it off, giving her reasons.

'Bless me!' said Mr. Thomas, 'are you the daughter of that poor fellow? I remember him. Well, well, it's a hard case that Fred Staymer should have half a million, and you—but we can get over the difficulty, my dear, by calling you Miss Dermot henceforward. I'll manage it.'

So Amy changed her name before any of the hostile family had seen her.

In process of time she met several, but Sir Philip did not call, and his son only once. He observed the companion with interest; but if any vague recollections rose in his mind he could not trace them. A fine young soldier he was, as Amy could not but admit. His efforts to divert Louisa failed disastrously, good-natured and amusing as they were, for such quick life and high spirit simply abashed the shy and timid girl. Seeing this, Fred gave her up carelessly, and turned to Miss Dermot, who was not more cordial. Dismissing both the little fools from his mind, he called no more.

So years passed until either girl reached her eighteenth birthday, with no recollection of a bitter word or thought betwixt them. Then Mr. Thomas died suddenly.

Saving a few legacies, he bequeathed all his fortune to Louisa, who was placed under the guardianship of Mr. Anthony Staymer, one of his brothers-in-law. Upon Amy Mr. Thomas settled an annuity of 100*l.* a year, and made a bequest of 5,000*l.*; but these legacies were conditional on her remaining with Louisa until the marriage of the latter. In due time the girls withdrew to Mr. Anthony Staymer's fine dwelling.

It was thought by persons interested that Fred could not ruin himself, though he tried his best, since gambling was no passion with him; and they backed their opinion by lending him money at an exorbitant rate. But circumstances unforeseen upset the calculation.

Both Sir Philip's brothers had withdrawn from the firm, but he still remained at its head in association with three nephews. Creeping age, however, warned him to retire. The partners objected and prayed in vain: Sir Philip went to Shuttleton, and commenced a thorough overhauling of affairs. Three days afterwards his nephews fled.

Things did not prove quite so bad as they would have been, doubtless, had the inquiry been delayed. The great firm was not insolvent, but a very large sacrifice would be necessary—how much was not ascertained when Sir Philip died of shame and self-reproach. Fred left the service, and bent his untrained intelligence to affairs. In process of time it was discovered that the whole sum left by Sir Philip in personal property would not suffice to meet the liabilities of the firm and his son's private debts.

Anthony Staymer advanced what was needful on mortgage of the estate, but it was clear that Fred could not keep up the house on what remained. He wished to sell, to rejoin the army, and make a position for himself.

But his uncle had other views; what they were needs no telling. Fred came to Thetford House for a visit presently.

Louisa was now a beautiful girl, but a look of trouble and anxiety in presence of strangers marred the expression of her perfect face. Though contact with Amy's high spirit had done much to give her an appearance of ease in society, the instinct of self-distrust and obedience remained at least as strong as ever.

Upon these characteristics Anthony relied, if, as was very improbable, she should not fall in love with her brilliant cousin.

Amy also was beautiful, though in quite another style, clear-eyed and resolute, eager, impulsive. I fear that she heard of the Staymer misfortunes in still delight, regarding them as vengeance for the conduct of Sir Philip towards her father. If she forgave the old man now that he was dead, her resentment did not perish with him, for was not Frederick still rich, as she understood, while James Keeley, who made that fortune, had almost starved?

Staymer Hall was advertised 'To Let,' and the young man made his home for a while at Thetford. These shocks had sobered him a little. Amy found herself obliged to confess that he was not the loud, empty-headed rake she had been pleased to fancy, but doubtless he would prove to be just as objectionable in some other way. A few days after his arrival, however, a very small incident disconcerted her.

The three were riding through a lane, in which low posts and rails had been set at intervals beside the path, for some object long forgotten. The flow of talk was dull and laboured. To make a small diversion Amy leapt each barrier and challenged her companions to follow. Louisa rode gracefully, but with no courage, and when she prepared to obey, as usual, her distress was evident. Fred dissuaded her so gravely, with such an anxious demonstration of the peril, that Amy conceived very scornful ideas of his nerve and horsemanship.

A mile or two beyond they met Mrs. Anthony driving home. Louisa complained of fatigue, dismounted, and took a seat beside her aunt.

'Now, Miss Dermot,' Fred exclaimed cheerily, as the others drove on, 'are you game for an old-fashioned steeplechase? But let us wait till poor little Loo can't see.'

They returned across country, flying, and Amy found herself quite out—not in the matter of his riding alone.

She fought hard against a growing conviction that Fred was a chivalrous and gallant fellow. Towards her he showed just the mingling of respect and interest and familiarity which became their respective positions, but with Louisa he made no progress, and Amy was glad to see it. She suspected the projects in view.

Fred perceived in no long time that the more agreeable he made himself the more confused and troubled his cousin grew; though gentle and attentive to her, he fell into a habit of talking with the companion.

It was not easy to keep alive a feeling of distrust and hostility as she came to know him better, but Amy struggled, recalling her

grievances hour by hour. He relieved her on a sudden, going with some friends on a yachting voyage.

In his absence, a cousin of the other branch took lodgings in the neighbourhood, which was convenient for his business in town. The Staymers hardly recognised him, for Mark Thomas was a very unobtrusive young fellow socially and personally, cool, silent, and thoughtful. They allowed him to go to and fro much as he pleased, to escort the girls from church on Sunday, and to call of an evening. Amy had often met him, but his time of greatest intimacy at Clapham had reached an end just at the moment when her own began. Mark went to study the language and commercial affairs at Leipzig before establishing himself in a modest way at home. This cousin was the only male being with whom Louisa could be comfortable. His ways did not daunt her, and his cool self-possession gave a sense of trust.

But Amy had no suspicion how far this soft and timid liking went until Fred's return was announced.

After breakfast on the day which fixed that event, Mrs. Anthony took Louisa to her room, whence the child emerged trembling and pale and tearful.

'Oh, Amy!' she cried, taking refuge in her friend's arms, 'I am to marry Fred! Oh, isn't it dreadful? Oh! I don't know whatever I shall do!' And so on, helpless in her misery.

'If it's dreadful, darling, you shan't be allowed to do it, that's all. What did your aunt say?'

'Oh! she said my mourning was over, and Fred's would be in a short time. And he was coming back on purpose to marry me, and he loves me very much—and—she talked like that! Oh! I'm so wretched!'

'Poor little Louie! Well, did you tell her you wouldn't?'

'Amy!—Then aunt said it was my duty, because Fred is ruined, and I can set the family up again with my money. And she doesn't mean to stand any nonsense, because it's for my good, and I must! Oh, oh!'

'Your manner betrayed you, darling; but it doesn't signify. It's not your duty, and if you don't wish you shall not marry Fred. So that's all about it. Let me think.' The girl waited patiently, sobbing in her arms.

'Can we trust Mr. Thomas?'

'Oh yes, but——'

'But what?'

'I would rather not speak to him, if you don't mind.'

‘Of course not. I’ll speak, if necessary.’

‘But, dear Amy, please, if it doesn’t matter, I would rather——’

‘Show me your face! You won’t? Oh, very well. Then I draw my own conclusions.’

‘Oh, there aren’t any conclusions to draw!’ But Louisa would not emerge from the shelter she had found, crying, with another burst of tears, ‘It’s no use! I must marry Fred if aunt tells me!’

‘There! Take comfort, little one. I’ll see about it.’

She requested an interview with Mrs. Anthony, and told her that the match was distasteful. That haughty dame resented the companion’s status—immovable until Louisa’s marriage—and herself personally. She replied:

‘We looked for this, Miss Dermot, and my husband thinks you have every call to protest. That is the natural view for a gentleman to take, but ladies expect more delicacy from one of their own sex.’

‘I don’t understand, madam.’

‘Of course. Well, Miss Dermot, I advise you to make your arrangements, for my niece will certainly be married shortly.’

Then Amy caught the significance of her remarks, and hotly replied: ‘Perhaps she will, madam, and for my interest in the matter I hope it will be very shortly indeed.’

Mrs. Anthony did not comprehend now, but she could get no explanation. They parted in hostility avowed. After reflecting and consulting with her husband, the lady made up her mind that Miss Dermot had a wicked scheme for wedding the heiress to some low fellow, probably a connection of her own. Thereupon she kept strict watch over the letters, forbade her servants to admit any visitor to Miss Dermot, and put a stop to outdoor exercise on Louisa’s part. Thus absorbed in one idea, she paid no attention to Mark Thomas.

Amy and he came to an understanding very quickly. He heard the news with indignation, confessed his love, and declared himself ready to elope, if needful, at a moment’s notice. But this was an abstract proposition. When Amy had brought the cousins together, and Louisa, frightened almost to death, had given a trembling consent, practical questions arose. Mark was not prepared to marry just then. He had sunk all his means available in a speculation, absolutely safe, and sure to give a large return. But for the moment he was penniless.

Some men, Amy thought to herself with scorn, would take a girl they loved just as she stood, would carry her to the registrar’s



office, and establish her in their bachelor lodging without an instant's question that she would be happy there—and somehow Fred's image flashed across her mind in thinking of such a man. But young Thomas was methodical, a slave to respectability; by that disposition, indeed, Louisa's confidence had been won, and her love followed. The registrar's office he could accept at a pinch, but the house, the furniture, the decent surroundings of a *bourgeois* marriage, how could they be dispensed with? And Mark had no cash. Moreover, he could think of nobody who would lend, and an accommodation bill was no less than anathema. So matters stood when Fred came home.

Amy knew her charge too well to advise dissimulation. That effort would have raised embarrassment to such a pitch that she might have fallen ill. Things were bad enough already. The aunt gave a vigorous reminder in the morning, with the result that Louisa seemed almost idiotic when they met. Mrs. Anthony declared to Fred that this was her manner of showing delight, and, under the peculiar circumstances, the explanation was not actually absurd. But it could not be accepted long, when from day to day the girl grew paler, and her pretty forehead creased more deeply with lines of bewildered distress. Uncle and aunt urged Fred to propose and have done with it at once: they guaranteed Louisa's joyful consent, and they answered for the rest. Perplexed and pitiful, amused also, he would not take that course.

On the third day, when they chanced to be alone, he asked: 'Are you in my cousin's confidence, Miss Dermot?'

'Perfectly, Captain Staymer.'

'Then you know that our aunt has mentioned to her a certain wish of the family with reference to her marriage?'

'I know.'

'And what does she think?'

'The family cares little what she thinks; but I——'

'Pardon me! Let us drop the family. What were you going to say about yourself?'

'Dropping the family, I say that your conduct is brutal. You know the poor child is weak, that she is mentally unable to resist, that she hates—hates the thought of marrying you—and——'

'Pardon me again! It is unnecessary to go further. I have the information I sought. Now, Miss Dermot, I am not conceited; on the contrary, I always bear in mind that I have still much to learn, and much experience to gather. At the same

time, a man of my age cannot be unaware that girls, in general, are rather pleased than otherwise to be in his company. Hitherto I have never tested their regard to the degree which the family has done towards Louisa—resuming the family just for a moment. I should like to know, if you can tell me, where her objection lies. It is a question purely selfish, but not designed to satisfy mere curiosity. I wish to learn, because the hint may be useful at a future time.'

'I can't tell you, sir. Perhaps Louisa is unreasonable, but dislike is not governed by common-sense.'

'Oh—dislike! I should be very sorry indeed to think that my poor little cousin entertains such a strong feeling.'

'I should not have said that. The word escaped me. I believe that in her heart she likes you very much, only—she does not love you.'

'Thank you. Then we return to the question, Why not?'

Her hasty revolt against an inquiry which seemed to be dictated by conceit—though he denied it—was checked by the real feeling of his protest. Amy had an inspiration.

'Perhaps because she loves somebody else.'

'Ah! that is a comforting explanation! Since you are in Louisa's confidence, I venture to disregard the "perhaps." Will you tell me all about it?'

The inspiration still upheld her. Amy told everything.

'What a dull young prig! However, I know Mark Thomas well enough. He is honest as daylight, and he'll make little Loo happy. I am much obliged to you, Miss Dermot! Leave the rest to me.'

'But, Captain Staymer, you will not betray their secret to your aunt?'

'Not if I know it, by Jove!' he answered, laughing. 'My excellent relatives are so devoted to my interests that they would cut me off with a shilling all round if they knew I was not following the course they recommend. Be quite easy!'

Mark had been away, making a last effort to borrow money without the formality of a bill, against which his superstitious protested. He came back in high satisfaction, and discussed with immediate interest the details of his elopement—for an elopement was obviously necessary. Louisa had still two years to pass under Mr. Anthony's guardianship, and he would never consent to her marriage with a mere Thomas. Amy was very anxious to know where he had found the cash, but amongst this young fellow's virtues the ability to keep a secret was conspicuous.

One morning Louisa did not appear at breakfast, and a letter, singularly coherent, gave the reason. Amy had made up her mind to watch the effect, but at the last moment her courage gave way. She slipped from the room before Mrs. Anthony descended.

That lady's rage and stupor could not be repressed before the servants, and Fred took upon himself to order them away.

'It's a dreadful business, of course,' he said, 'but let us keep it to ourselves. Confound that impudent young counter-jumper! But I suppose there's nothing we can do, uncle? They're married by this time.'

'It's Miss Dermot's doing! She shall leave the house this instant,' cried Mrs. Anthony, pulling the bell-handle with such violence that it broke. 'I'll give her my mind. I'll tell her what she is, the low-born hussy!'

'Please don't be violent with the girl.'

'You take her part, Fred? She's been practising her tricks on you, has she? Thank Heaven, I can see plainly enough, and I'll show her I can speak. Where are those servants?' She tugged at the bell again, and, finding no resistance, snapped the handle off.

'I must tell you, aunt, that Miss Dermot is not the one to blame,' and he frankly avowed his share in the transaction.

Ten minutes afterwards Fred left the house. Mrs. Anthony had spent her wildest rage on him, and when Amy appeared she expressed herself briefly.

'You think you have done a very fine thing, Miss Dermot of course; but we have a consolation—in losing our niece we get rid of you, and the gain is much more important than the loss. It may somewhat damp your satisfaction to learn that my husband has disinherited Captain Staymer, and will foreclose on his remaining property at once. Good day! I expect you to quit this roof before lunch-time.'

She was getting into the cab loaded with her trunks, when Fred returned.

'Oh, Captain Staymer, will you walk a few steps with me?' She told the cabman to follow. 'Can it be true that Mr. Anthony lays the blame on you? Why?'

'Because I lent Thomas the money for furnishing, I suppose.'

'You did? I half suspected it. But how did they know?'

'I told them.'

'Why?—I guess! It was to shield me! How very foolish!

And how generous! But they have disinherited you, and they are going to seize your property? Oh! I am very, very grieved that your kindness should be so requited.'

'Oh! never mind, Miss Dermot. I shall see my reward in Louie's face, I hope, soon.'

'But you are quite ruined now, aren't you?'

'Not quite. I shall be able to rub along. Don't look so distressed. My notion is to volunteer, and, with reasonable luck, I may win a commission before the war is over. That step gained, I have no fear for the result.'

'I must tell you something, Captain Staymer. My name is not Dermot, but Keeley, and I am the little girl you spoke to so kindly eight years ago, when my father lay dying.'

'Bless my soul! That accounts for the vague impression I have sometimes felt in observing you. I hope I am forgiven now, Miss Keeley?'

'Oh, heartily, sir! But you gave that little girl five thousand pounds.'

'So I did; and my father gave her five thousand also.'

'Oh!—then you are twice as rich as I thought. The money is lying untouched. Will you relieve my mind by resuming possession of it now?'

'Not at the price. I refuse to part with the agreeable sense of your approval for ten thousand pounds.'

'Oh! but you are not asked to do that.'

'Still I decline. Something more you must throw into the bargain, Miss Keeley.'

His tone had a significance not to be misunderstood. Amy was silent.

'You don't ask what it is.'

No answer.

'It is yourself, Amy.'

'I am going back to my friends, Captain Staymer. If you like, we will get into the cab now, and when you have made their acquaintance, and thought about it——'

'Then——'

'Then—then—of course—I don't know!'

Five weeks later they were married.

FREDERICK BOYLE.

## *Of Homely Tragedy.*

IT is but a little place this, and I have been trying hard for more than twenty years to know everybody in it. I have sometimes vainly thought that I do in fact know nearly everybody in it; know nearly everybody in it very well. But on any commonplace morning of a working-day, when I try (I often do) to picture out the actual feeling with which these men and women are setting themselves to the task before each, I am made to feel that I know ever so little. There was one, who has been taken away, who used to tell me very frankly of many things he had to think of; and in some imperfect way I think I saw into his heart and his life. But I see others daily, who (if one may reason from oneself to other human beings) must day by day be feeling very anxious, very beaten, yet who meet one with a fairly bright face, and never utter a whisper of their inner experience. A very eminent man, who went many years ago, said in my hearing more than once or twice, *I can't tell you how strange it is to me to meet Smith* (that was not the name). *He has always a cheerful word, and a smile on his face: and yet I know that he is just about broken-hearted, and that he has to bear a burden of care and sordid misery which would soon kill me.* Then the eminent man, talking freely to another not undistinguished, who is gone too, made mention of certain facts as to the actual position and the antecedents of poor Smith: and, shaking sympathetic heads, the two agreed that if placed in Smith's shoes (very worn ones) they would at once lie down and die. Yet Smith, in the fashion named, kept them at arm's length: thus holding his place as a man, thus keeping his self-respect. I remember when a silly and fussy little soul, seeking to force himself into the confidence of a suffering woman (the law reports had made her sufferings patent to mankind), said, *We all feel for you so much, Mrs. Brown* (that was not the name), *in your troubles.* But Mrs. Brown replied, resolutely, *I have no troubles, Mr. Littlebody*; and definitively turned away.

That friend, indicated above (though his name is not given), once said to me, with an anxious face, *There may be hyper-confidence*. He said the words as we met in the morning, having sat up together very late the night before. *Not with some people*, was the answer: *make yourself sure of that*. And the fine face cleared. I will say here (for some will know of whom I am speaking) that everything he ever said to me, speaking sometimes as he could speak to few, went only to make me hold him in the deeper reverence as a truly great man, and in warmer affection as a man lovable beyond the manner of the race.

We are alone, each of us, in our life and our work; as we shall be alone when we go away from both. The nearest approach which can be in this world to a man's life and work being thoroughly known and understood, is in the case (not uncommon, yet not common) of a man's having found the great treasure of a thoroughly-mated wife. She need not be very clever. But affection, and sympathy, give a wonderful intuition of things never told: and it is a great step towards knowing a thing well, to have it continually before you. When a man who has been thus favoured is left a widower, he passes into a spiritual solitude. There is a considerable space (not to say a great gulf) between most men and their nearest friends. Many men have no near friends at all. Many more have only one or two.

All this that has been said one feels profoundly. Not so much through any desolate sense that oneself is little known and very imperfectly understood by those who know one best, or at least who see one most frequently; but by having it borne in upon one how little one knows of the inner life and experience of those known longest, known best. And if we come to know people well, it is not through what they tell us: though they be the most outspoken of mankind. Words do not suffice to express human feeling, with its lights and shadows, its unspeakable variety of conscious experience. We come to know people well through long watching them; specially at times when they have no thought that they are under the microscope. And then we are made to feel how complex is the homeliest character. There are those who think to dash off a human being's nature as by one deeply marked pencil-stroke:—*A conceited creature*, I have heard it said by even a wise (though impatient) man: *A cantankerous fool: A humbug*. Ah, that will not do. Human nature is not so simple as to be truly described thus briefly.

I remember very vividly how the departed friend who has



been steadily in the writer's memory as these lines have been written, told me, more than once or twice (it never was other than most interesting to listen to him, talking upon any subject whatever), how at a certain famous Club whose name and locality need not be indicated, he had occasional glimpses of the solitariness of intellectual exertion never attained elsewhere. Various eminent men, he said, who were members of that Club used there to write the articles in which, through divers renowned periodicals, they conveyed instruction to an attentive world. To simple country souls, whose work must be done in solitude, it is a thing very hard to be understood how any mortal should write anything at a Club beyond a letter to a single friend. But, passing from that, it was related how those distinguished writers would converse in lively tones and with uncontorted countenance with any acquaintance, till the task was taken in hand: but how, in a few minutes after the agony of original composition had been entered on, you would see them writhing about on their chairs, glaring fiercely up at the ceiling or at indefinite space, twisting their expressive faces into horrible frowns. So saying, my friend (who in fact could write as well as any of them) sat down at a little writing-table: convulsively writhed and wildly glared at vacancy: stated that he had repeatedly beheld four or five popular men at the same moment thus twisting and glaring; and that even such was what must be gone through by such as would with success reach mankind through the great London newspapers. He felt deeply (he said) both how hard and how lonely was the exertion of their whole nature which these big-wigs were going through: and he wondered much that they did not each retreat to a solitary room where nobody could see them.

Dark days have been passing over this place. We have been mourning, with true sorrow, the loss of one gone away. We have all made much of the occasion: though not in any way too much. But there is humble, homely tragedy going on close to us, going on continually: and few know of it. Hardly any one cares.

It is a smooth, unlined face now, that I am looking at just for about two minutes: I am left here for that space alone with it, and when the minutes are past, I shall never see it any more. It is the face of a woman of near three-score years and ten. Smooth and unlined now, though I have sometimes seen it look lined and anxious enough, for never was there a harder-working or a more thoughtful creature in this world. The smooth painless face is looking out from the last resting-place which can be provided for

any of us: God be thanked, we have not sunk to that depth of vulgarity and affectation which is implied in calling it a *casket*. I have come to perform the simple service of this nation when the sister who has gone before us is laid in the earth. This is but Friday: and last Sunday she said to a poor neighbour, in her quiet way, *I'll be found dead some day*. Such predictions do not often come true. But the prediction has come true here.

Was it selfish, a little ago, when the writer, speaking of work carried on to the *very end*, thought mainly of such work as his own; or in any case, of the work of better educated people, Masters of Arts, and the like? Here indeed the hard work ceased not to the very end. She went out in the morning to a little room within sight of her door, and took to her work. It was humble work, though hard, and poorly paid. She was seen by divers neighbours running actively about at it. Then for an hour and a half she was left alone; and at the end of that time her old husband went to see how she was getting on. For she was working by herself, as you and I, my brothers who write, are left alone for hours together in the chamber where we bend over the page we are covering, possibly (though we know it not) writhing and glaring and making hideous faces like the more renowned writers in the grand club far away. Then, even as somebody looks in upon us and briefly asks how our work is prospering, the old man looked in. The Sunday prophecy had come true. She was 'found dead': kneeling on the ground with her head resting on a rude little table. She had been taken from the midst of her morning's work: taken quite away from it all. But what she felt, if anything, either of bodily pain or mental perturbation (*Anxius vixi, perturbatus egrediar*, said the old schoolman), no one knows. Only she was gone.

If one had known, the last time one exchanged a word with her, what was coming: one is ready to fancy, though it is pure illusion, that we should have noticed something remarkable in what she said and how she looked. It is not so. There would have been no difference: none at all. Things will not end dramatically, in actual life. They break off in the most unsatisfactory way. After more than twenty years of daily intercourse, I cannot remember at all the last time I talked with Principal Tulloch. For it never entered one's mind that it was the last time. He had been out of sorts, so we thought: he went away for a few weeks' change, of course to come back again perfectly well. So friends slip away.

One thing was plain, and the writer remarked it with entire approval. When the old man, in a very simple and touching fashion, told the story of that day, it never for a moment entered into his head that his wife who had left him was not his wife still. It is much bigger folk, possessed by a sour and hateful religionism, who think it a fine thing to express views which flatly contradict the essential instincts of humanity: things more sacred than any religion, and which have come straighter from the good Power that made us. Sorely warped from the healthful condition of man must that good soul have been who, lying on his bed in the last hour, the poor partner of many anxious years ministering to him, said in a solemn voice, *Lord have mercy on this gentlewoman who was once my wife*; and then put her hand away. Sharp was the pang which the sour puritan sent to that faithful heart. But then the very basis of his religious belief for many years had been, that the uglier, more disagreeable and more unnatural anything was, the likelier it was to be the right thing. And the god in whom he believed was a small-minded, touchy being, always on the watch for a slight, and shabbily jealous to see human creatures care for any one but himself. It is a terrible thing to say of any professed Christian that the god he has been taught to set up is not the God you worship at all. But surely moral qualities which are mean and devilish make a deity quite as far from the truth as any hideous Hindoo idol, physically revolting, can be. That decent dying man, who (let us hope) did not know the meaning of what he said, would doubtless have looked down as from a huge elevation upon Charles Kingsley vehemently saying that unions like his own were for eternity: upon the dear woman who said to Stanley, in parting, *Think of me as in the next room*: and would not have been touched in the very least by the story Carlyle tells of the German king, holding the hand of his dying wife, who when the faint breath had ceased, and those around thought she was gone, felt the chilling hand give three slight, slight pressures; which did not mean farewell.

He was too simple-minded, that old friend of mine, to vex himself with perplexities as to where his wife had gone. She was *at rest*; she was where things are *far better*. That was quite enough; his faith was simple, was firm. Just yesterday a good woman, fading away through unutterable weariness day and night, but now nearing the change, said to me as I left her, *Rest will be sweet*. And I suppose it is rest which is uppermost in many minds, as it was with the weary Nathaniel Hawthorne. But the

look-out is very vague. One sometimes wonders that good people are content to have it so vague. I knew a little boy, long ago, who had done some very small wrong-doing; and then was possessed by the feeling that things could never be right again. All that remained for him was to run away. Accordingly he proposed to a little brother, a few years older, that they should run away together. The elder brother was so much amused by the suggestion, that he pretended to assent to it, to see what the little desperado would do. Finally, each having taken a large piece of bread, they started on a dark winter night. After going a hundred yards, the elder suggested to the younger that probably there was no need for fleeing from their home; and they came back to find the desperate trouble could be most simply set right. For in that house punishment was unknown. The heads of it did not scruple to say that they esteemed Solomon as a very silly person in the matter of education. And the result, so far, has been incomparably more satisfactory than was the result of Solomon's free use of 'the rod.' His son proved the very greatest fool in history. But when the wanderers returned, it was asked, with much interest, of the small wrong-doer, what he intended to do when he had fled from his home. *Oh, just beg about,* was the ready reply. I have often thought that even so vague is the outlook of most of us, thinking of a future life. The little man did not in any way realise what it would be when the dinner-hour came: still less what it would be when the winter-night settled down, with its awful cold and darkness. And we are all extremely like him. Which is very strange.

Then comes the question, How will they do without you? I think it very likely that when this good old woman felt that something had laid hold of her which was quite different from anything known before, her main thought would be, Who would take care of the poor old man? He was all she had to think of. *I could not have lain down at a worse time,* were the words of the most faithful of servants and friends, when the trouble came which laid her aside, and in a very few days took her away. An infinity of things which ought to be done pressed upon the faithful heart. But the poor mother, the working man's wife, who did everything for her children: I know no more touching tragedy than that which I see too often, when she has to go. All the details of their little stock of raiment: their daily food: their school-books, their getting ready for school, their being sent punctually: their little illnesses: their little faults which need correcting (not punishing):

and how, in anxious marketing, to make the hard-earned wages go farthest: these are the things which crowd in, which weigh very heavily. I confess, quite frankly, and I am not in the least ashamed of it, that when I have had to look on a poor sharp face, on a poor dying creature rent by such cares; I felt at least a thousand times as much as I should feel for a Prime Minister disappointed of his majority, or for an Emperor (or the like) deservedly kicked out by the nation he demoralised. As for the dethroned monarch, I have no doubt I care for him exactly as much as he ever cared for any one but himself: the precise amount need not be specified. But I have found that which was like to break one's heart in the concerns of my poor parishioners. I have found a pathos far beyond Æschylus or Sophocles in the homeliest of Homely Tragedy.

A. K. H. B.

## *Marrying and Giving in Marriage.*

BY MRS. MOLESWORTH,

AUTHOR OF 'HATHERCOURT RECTORY,' 'CARROTS,' &C.

### CHAPTER I.

IT is but seldom in life that events—unexpected or little looked-for events more especially perhaps—bring with them cause for either unmixed rejoicing or unmitigated regret. I doubt if news often illumines a human countenance with less qualified pleasure than shone in the face of Lady Christina Verney the day that her husband announced to her his reluctant acceptance of a certain mission, diplomatic or financial, perhaps both—its precise nature may be left indefinite—which would oblige himself and his family to take up their abode in Paris for a period of several months.

Life, it is but fair to Lady Christina to premise, had not been all a path of rose-leaves to her. Her lines had lain over some rough ground, and the pleasant places had been tardy in making their appearance. And it is open to question if overmuch scrambling or picking one's way should be looked upon as of the nature of salutary and wholesome discipline. The skin may harden and toughen till the delicacy of perception and touch suffers irretrievably: some mire too is apt to stick.

And above all are these disastrous results to be apprehended when the outset of life—childhood or youth—is subjected to ungenial conditions. This had been pre-eminently the case with Lady Christina Verney.

'So you are pleased?' said Mr. Verney, rubbing his chin undecidedly and staring into the fire.

'Pleased? I should think so. It is the very thing of all others I should have wished. It will bring you forward, Owen; there is no saying what it may not lead to. And—long ago I knew Paris so well—I shall be delighted to be there again, and above all to take Aveline.'



'You will miss the season here,' remarked Mr. Verney. He was far from a stupid man, but his wife puzzled him sometimes, well as he knew her, and he glanced up at her from under his shaggy fair eyebrows with a somewhat dubious expression.

Lady Christina smiled in a superior way.

'The season, my dear Owen,' she repeated. 'You surely do not think so poorly of me as to imagine me one of those worldly-minded women who would complain of missing the season when it is so clearly at the call of duty. Besides, we may make some pleasant acquaintances in Paris. My old friend Madame de Boncœur will be delighted to introduce us; she's in a very good set I believe. It will do Aveline no harm to see a little French society, though I should not wish her to form intimacies exactly. They look at things so differently from us; in some ways there is so little sentiment about them. They are so practical, so worldly.'

'Humph,' said Mr. Verney, 'the French *have* a trick of calling spades spades now and then.'

But he did not speak impressively, and his wife scarcely heard what he said.

'There *is* a coarseness about the French notwithstanding their surface refinement,' she agreed—she would have agreed with anything Mr. Verney chose to say that morning. 'No, I shall discourage any intimacies certainly. But there may be some of our own English friends there,' she went on with an almost imperceptible change of tone, which did not, however, escape Mr. Verney. 'The embassy people of course we shall know, and my cousins, the Roslands, will be staying a while on their way back from Cannes, and—oh yes, by the bye, I heard from Lady Ayrton the other day that Sir Francis will not be able to return home for three months at least, and they hope to be joined by their son almost immediately. Poor Sir Francis, he has had a sad time of it. I shall be glad to cheer her a little, poor thing.'

Mr. Verney did not answer. He was still staring into the fire, still rubbing his chin.

'I wonder what Christina has got in her head,' he was saying to himself; but outwardly he made no sign.

'It will cost us a lot of money,' he said at last, rousing himself; 'I was talking about it to Bart this afternoon.'

'Then if that is all Bart has to say on the subject he had better keep his remarks to himself,' said Lady Christina, with a slight touch of asperity.

'Come now, Christina, you're not fair on him. *He* didn't suggest the idea, he only agreed with me when I said so. On the contrary, poor fellow'—but here Mr. Verney broke off, quickly resuming again—'he was saying we might let this house.'

'Of course we can let this house,' said Lady Christina; 'I do not need your brother to remind me of that.'

This time the asperity was quite unconcealed. Mr. Verney wished he had refrained from quotations.

He rose from his seat—a process which took some little time, for he was very tall and very spare, and his movements were deliberate—stretched himself as he stood on the hearth-rug, and seemed about to make up his mind to leave the room, when the door opened and a girl came in.

'Papa,' she exclaimed, 'I didn't know you had come home. Are you busy?' she went on, glancing from tall, irresolute-looking papa on the hearth-rug to mamma, bright-eyed and energetic, already re-established at her writing-table with a pile of notes and letters, of neatly docketed bills and tradesmen's books, before her—how many thousand times in her life had not Aveline Verney seen her thus?—'Are you talking? Shall I not stay?'

'We have finished talking,' said her father.

Lady Christina said nothing. Five minutes before she had been in brilliant spirits, but somehow the mention of her brother-in-law had rubbed the bloom off her first pleasure. Still the solid satisfaction was there, and it carried the day.

'No,' she said, after a minute's silence, during which Aveline stood there uncertain, with an indefinite and not unpleasant feeling of expectancy. She was going to hear something; she scented it in the air. What could it be?—nothing bad surely. Papa and mamma did not seem annoyed. 'No,' said Lady Christina, 'you need not go away. Owen, you had better tell her; she is no longer a child. At one-and-twenty,' with this time the very slightest shadowy hint of reproach in her voice; 'at one-and-twenty many a girl is at the head of a house. Tell her, Owen.'

Then Aveline turned her inquiring grey eyes to her father. She was tall like him—tall and fair, but not spare, scarcely indeed to be called slight, but yet with a girlish liteness about her which accorded with the underlying appeal in eyes on the surface calm if not cold.

Mr. Verney unfolded his long length yet a little further, but slowly, as he prepared to speak.

'I had a letter from Paris this morning, *Avé*,' he began.

Then something caught his attention about the lower buttons of his waistcoat or his watch-chain; he frowned down at the misbehaving object and began disentangling it as if all else were unimportant. It was a peculiarity of Mr. Verney's to stop short at the end of the first sentence whenever he had anything of interest to announce. Aveline knew this so well that her eagerness increased.

'From Paris,' she murmured, under her breath, and a faint colour rose to her face. But aloud she said only one word—

'Papa!'

It pulled him together again, and the appeal, uppermost now in the girl's eyes, kept him to the point.

'Yes, from Paris,' he repeated emphatically, as if Aveline had questioned his statement. 'I don't know if your mother told you that there was an idea, some time ago, of my undertaking a sort of—oh, you couldn't quite understand without a long explanation—a sort of mission there in connection with my department here. It will be a private arrangement—not coming much before the public. I thought it unlikely to go through, but to-day I have received the definite offer of it, and I have accepted it. Your mother is pleased at it—and so are you—eh?'

For the girl's face expressed unmistakable delight.

'Of course I am pleased, papa,' she was beginning, but her mother interrupted.

'I don't think that is the question, Owen,' she said. 'Aveline has, I *think*, been too well brought up to put her own personal likes or dislikes in the first place, when it is a matter of consequence for the whole family.'

'I didn't mean,' began Aveline, timidly, glancing at her father, but he said nothing. 'We shall *all* go to Paris, I suppose?' she asked, this time speaking to her mother.

Lady Christina turned to her husband.

'What are you thinking about the little ones?' she said. 'Of course Chris and Arthur will stay at school, but Leonora and the nursery children——?'

'They must all come,' said Mr. Verney, more decidedly than he had yet spoken. 'At least I won't go without them.'

Then Aveline's face, which had expressed suspense, grew completely sunny again.

'I don't know what I should have done without Leo,' she said, but too low for her mother to hear.

Mr. Verney was dining at his club that day. Lady Christina

and her daughter were alone at table, and in such circumstances the dinner was of the simplest, for Lady Christina had not served her long apprenticeship to high class poverty in vain.

Mother and daughter spoke little, but Aveline was not uneasy. She saw that Lady Christina was silent from preoccupation of mind only, and that, apparently, not of a disagreeable nature. There was no sensation of weight in the atmosphere, as of a storm brewing, such as the girl had learnt to descry the premonitory symptoms of, and to dread.

'Poor mamma,' she said to herself; 'no doubt she is counting over how many pairs of sheets, and pillow-cases, and table-cloths, and tea-spoons, will have to be packed up to take with us. I wish I cared more about things like that; if I did, perhaps we should get on better. I think I could fancy myself caring if—if I had a little house of my own, and somebody who thought I did things nicely, and——'

A moment later her mother looked up sharply, and glanced across the table. Aveline felt herself blush.

'What are you thinking of, my dear?' asked Lady Christina.

'A mixture of things, mamma,' Aveline replied truthfully. 'Just at the very instant you spoke, I was thinking that Mademoiselle has so often said that French pillows are a different shape from ours—she used to grumble at ours—and I was wondering if our pillow-cases would do.'

Lady Christina still looked at her daughter.

'Was that really the only thing you were thinking about?' she said.

'Mamma!' exclaimed Aveline, 'do I ever tell what isn't true? I didn't say it was the only thing I was thinking of—I said it was what I was thinking of at the instant you spoke.'

'You are the very queerest mixture of a woman and a baby of any girl I have ever known,' said her mother. But her tone was not unamiable.

Aveline smiled a little.

'Wasn't my remark a practical one?' she said. 'Seriously, dear mamma, I do wish to be practical, and to help you more. You are always thinking and working for us. Wouldn't it be a good time for me to begin taking more charge of things just now when we are going away?'

'No, my dear. It will be time enough when you have a house of your own to take charge of,' said her mother. And Aveline said no more, though she sighed a little.

Lady Christina rose from table.

'I must go,' she said. 'I have several letters to write to-night. You needn't cut that tart, Aveline, it will come in so well cold for luncheon to-morrow. If you haven't had enough to eat you can have something later with tea. I shall want a cup of tea, for I shall be writing till late.'

'I've had quite enough, thank you, mamma,' said Aveline, getting up in her turn. 'If you don't want me I'm going to Leo in the schoolroom, and to say good night to the little ones.'

So she went off to the nursery, while Lady Christina betook herself to her letters.

But Aveline did not stay long with the younger children. She was eager to get to the schoolroom, where her sister Leonora was still busy at work preparing to-morrow's lessons.

'I've nearly finished, Aveline,' she exclaimed, as the elder girl came in. 'Wait two minutes only, and then we can talk. Papa is out, I know.'

'And mamma is busy. She doesn't want me,' said Aveline. 'I told her I was coming to you.'

'And we can talk comfortably,' said Leo; 'I am so glad. I have such lots to say.'

'Finish your lessons first,' said Aveline.

She seated herself on the least uncomfortable of the school-room chairs, and drawing it towards the fire sat gazing into it, like her father. She was very like him as she sat thus, and Leo, darker and more energetic, hurrying to get her work done, peering with bent brows into dictionaries and grammars, reminded one forcibly of Lady Christina engrossed by her accounts. Yet in spite of difference of feature and complexion, that much discussed outward expression of affinity, that commonly called 'family' likeness, was strong and unmistakable between the sisters.

'There!' exclaimed Leonora, collecting her books and papers, and piling them neatly together as she spoke; 'there, now I've done. Mamma will be more particular than ever about my French now that we are going to Paris. I do so want to hear all about it, Aveline. Papa only told me a very little—he said I might ask you. Are we going soon? Aren't you awfully pleased, Avé? Avé, shan't we see Mr. Hereward there?'

'Yes, I suppose so,' said Aveline, somewhat impatiently. 'You run on so quick, Leo, you confuse me. I wish you would talk of one thing at a time. We shall see lots of people, no doubt; I wish you were a year, or a year and a half, older—if you

were seventeen, perhaps mamma would let you go out a little. It would be so nice. I should like it so much more if I had you to think about, and to talk it all over with afterwards.'

'We do the "talking over afterwards" pretty well as things are,' said Leo. 'And it is no use dreaming of my coming out till you are married, Avé. Mamma would not hear of it. So I hope you will take pity on me before long.'

Aveline sat silent for a few moments. Then she said rather abruptly:

'I know mamma would like me to be married. I sometimes wish it could be all settled, and that I could just be told I must do it—that it would be right. I don't know that I'd mind much.'

'Wouldn't you just?' said Leonora, with schoolboy emphasis, which she had caught from her brothers. 'When it came to the point, and you found out you didn't like the man——'

'No,' persisted Aveline, speaking more eagerly than her wont. 'I don't think I should mind. It would be a satisfaction to think one was pleasing one's family, and——'

'Suppose it was a really horrid man?' Leo interrupted.

'No good parents would want their daughter to marry a horrid man?' said Aveline.

'But if you couldn't like him?'

'If one was quite sure one couldn't marry anybody one *did* like or might have liked,' said Aveline, vaguely, 'I don't know that one would much mind.'

Leonora looked at her reproachfully.

'When you talk that way you're not at all like a heroine—and I like you to be a heroine,' she said.

'I never could be one,' said Aveline, smiling. 'But sometimes I think I should be glad to please mamma at almost any cost,' and the girl sighed a little.

Leonora hesitated before she spoke again, and when she did it was almost in a whisper.

'Aveline,' she said, 'when you speak of knowing you can't possibly marry any one you like, are you—don't be vexed with me—are you thinking of Mr. Hereward?'

'Oh, Leo!' said Aveline; 'you *are* rather tiresome. Why do you keep on always about Mr. Hereward? I'm sure I have told you about plenty of other men I have met.'

'Yes,' said Leo, composedly; 'you have certainly. But many of them I never saw, and those I did see never took any notice of me. But he always did—he was so nice when he came to call on



Sundays if ever I was in the drawing-room. Don't you remember, Aveline?'

'I've been trying to forget about him,' the elder sister answered, naively. 'I daresay I should almost forget him in a while if I never saw him again. I think I shall be sorry if he is still in Paris when we go, for if he is I can hardly help seeing a good deal of him. Mamma likes him, and she is sure to ask him. He would be useful to her, I daresay.'

'Yes,' said Leonora. Then she, too, sat silent for a few moments. 'I don't think I want to be grown-up, and come out, and all that,' she remarked gravely, at last. 'Life is very difficult for girls, I think.'

'Well, perhaps then you can understand a little what I mean about French girls,' said Aveline. 'Life cannot be so difficult for them.'

'I'd like to know how they feel about it,' said Leo. 'Do you think we shall get to know any, *well*, Aveline?'

Aveline shook her head.

'I don't in the least know how mamma intends to do,' she replied. 'She has some old friends in Paris, but I don't know if we shall know much of them.'

Leonora was by this time ensconced on the hearth-rug, her head leaning on her sister's knee.

'What are you thinking about?' said Aveline.

The child—for she was scarcely more—sat up and looked at her sister.

'I don't quite know,' she said, shaking her dark curly hair out of her eyes, and smiling a little. 'I think I was thinking what things I'd wish for if a fairy gave me some wishes.'

'It's no use thinking of such things,' said Aveline. 'There are no fairies and no wishes, and not much good luck. Still there are some nice things sometimes. I'm glad we're going to Paris—at first I was exceedingly glad, and then when I began thinking about it I was not sure about it. But on the whole I think I am. I am so thankful we are all going, Leo. It would have been dreadful if you had been left behind.'

'But mamma never thought of that, did she?' said Leo, looking startled.

'Papa didn't,' said Aveline. 'He said he wouldn't go without you and the three little ones. And mamma is so anxious to go that she won't make any difficulties about anything.'

'Is she so pleased about it?' said Leo.

'Very. I can see that she is. I wonder why—it will give her a great deal of trouble, and we shall miss the season here,' said Aveline. 'I suppose she will like to see some of her old friends again—she always says she was very happy in Paris when she was a girl. I think we'd better go to her now, Leo; she must have finished her letters I should think,' and Aveline got up as she spoke.

'I'm going to bed,' said Leo; 'I'm not dressed, and I'm sleepy. Good-night, Avé—if mamma asks for me, tell her I was doing my lessons till late and so I thought I'd better go to bed.'

Lady Christina was still writing when Aveline went into the drawing-room.

'Is that you, Aveline?' she said, with a slight touch of impatience. 'I haven't finished my letters yet. Get a book, and don't speak to me just yet.'

'I wonder what mamma has so much to write about. I wish she would let me help her,' thought the girl to herself. But she sat down quietly, and either read or pretended to do so, till at last Lady Christina rose, with a sigh half of relief half of weariness, with two or three letters ready for posting in her hands.

'Ring, Aveline,' she said; 'I will send these to-night,' she added, half speaking to herself, 'even though it is late. They may catch an early mail,' and when the servant came into the room she told him to post them at once.

'Will you have a great deal to do about our going to Paris, mamma?' asked Aveline.

'Naturally,' said her mother, 'a family like ours can't be moved without a good deal of trouble. But as it is so clearly for—for your father's good, we must not mind the trouble.'

'Shall we know many people there?' asked Aveline. 'Shall we go out a good deal?'

hardly know,' said her mother. 'Of course we must go out, though probably not as much as here. But I should like you to see something of French society, though I should not care for you to see *much* of it. And there will probably be some of our English friends there—the Roslands and the Ayrtons certainly.'

'Oh, mamma, not that horrid Wilfred Ayrton; it will quite spoil Paris if he is there.'

'Aveline, I am ashamed of you,' said Lady Christina; 'you are really past the age for talking so childishly. You know very well that I am exceedingly fond of the Ayrtons. They have been very steady and kind friends to me for many years, and it isn't

right to dislike a man just because he is—well, perhaps a little slow and heavy, and not particularly good-looking.’

‘It isn’t for that I dislike him, mamma. He is so very selfish and—and coarse somehow. It isn’t only that he is stupid.’

‘How often have you seen him to enable you to form such a matured opinion of him, may I ask?’ said Lady Christina, icily.

‘Oh, mamma, don’t be vexed with me. I’ve only seen him two or three times, I know. But what does it matter? I do think Lady Ayrton’s very nice and kind, and I’ll like *her* as much as you wish. And it is she that is your old friend, not that—not her son—so you needn’t be vexed with me,’ and Aveline leant over her mother to kiss her.

The kiss was not repelled; caresses were somewhat rare in the Verney family—perhaps Lady Christina appreciated Aveline’s kiss more than she would have thought it wise to allow, perhaps she had her own reasons for not wishing to rouse discussion or disagreement on the subject of Mr. Wilfred Ayrton. Be that as it may, she permitted, if she did not return, her daughter’s kiss; and there was even an approach to a smile on her face as she replied:

‘I am not vexed with you, my dear. I am very tired, and I have a great many things on my mind. I suppose it is impossible for a girl of your age quite to enter into all I have to think about. But don’t get into the habit of taking up foolish prejudices, whatever you do, Aveline. There is nothing more fatal to a girl’s success in life.’

‘One can’t help knowing whom one likes and dislikes, mamma,’ objected Aveline.

‘Yes; but in many cases it is right to keep one’s mind and judgment in abeyance, as it were, and still more, to have *some* respect for the judgment of others—of one’s parents for instance. And where your opinion of any one in particular has not been asked—’

‘You don’t see that I need give it,’ said Aveline, laughing. ‘Very well, mamma, I won’t obtrude my likes and dislikes, and I’ll try not to be prejudiced. Now isn’t that good of me? What could I say more?’

The fair smiling face was irresistible. Lady Christina herself was the one to volunteer a kiss this time.

‘Good-night, my dear,’ she said; and as Aveline left the room, ‘I’m sure I only wish for her good,’ she added to herself.

## CHAPTER II.

WHEN one is still very glad of good fires in London—when it is indeed still so cold that it is difficult to imagine the time will ever return when a good fire will be no longer the best thing in life—there are nevertheless, as everybody believes and as many people know for themselves, places where already it is almost overpoweringly hot. Pau is one of those places. All of a sudden some spring morning, the sun bursts out with extraordinary vigour; the short season of sharp biting cold seems like a dream, and one has to look at the dates of the newspapers or of one's letters to make sure that it is only March or April and not August.

On such a day, about four in the afternoon, one of the letters, —the principal one indeed—that Lady Christina Verney had written on the evening after her husband's acceptance of the Paris appointment, reached its destination. This was the sitting-room of a handsome suite on the first floor of the *Hôtel Beau Soleil*. The person to whom the letter was addressed was standing near the window, beside which an invalid couch was drawn up. A gentleman, elderly if not old, lay on the couch. At the moment the servant came into the room he was speaking in a rather querulous tone to the lady beside him.

'Away for the day, you think? It is very inconsiderate of him. I never see him. I might just as well have no son. But it must be your fault, Sophia—you have not the knack of attracting him to stay at home as other mothers manage to do. It is very hard upon me—this wretched health and everything—Wilfred first of all—going to the dogs.'

Lady Ayrton moved to her husband with some words of apology or deprecation on her gentle, faded face.

'I'm sure I'm as sorry about it as you can be, Francis. I would do anything to'—

But the welcome words, 'A letter, my lady,' interrupted her.

'A letter from Christina Verney. I am glad of that,' she exclaimed. 'I hope there will be something to amuse you in it,' and she sat down as she spoke and began to open it.

'To amuse me,' grumbled Sir Francis; 'not very likely. This outrageous heat, joined to all my other discomforts, is enough to send me out of my mind or into my grave at once.'

But all the same he watched his wife's face with interest as she read quickly down the first page of the letter and eagerly turned it without speaking.

'Well—what is it? What are you smiling about like a—what is there in the letter? Can't you speak, Sophia?'

'Oh, I beg your pardon!' she exclaimed. 'I quite forgot you were waiting. I am so very pleased, Francis. The Verneys will be in Paris when we get there. Mr. Verney has to be there for some months, as Christina spoke of some time ago, and they are all going over.'

'Is that all there is in the letter? I don't see that it matters much to us—I like Verney well enough, but I don't particularly care about him. I really thought there was some pleasant news for once,' growled Sir Francis.

'It isn't *unpleasant*,' said poor Lady Ayrton; 'you have often said you liked both Christina and her daughter. The pretty, fair girl, you remember?'

'Yes—she's not a bad sort of girl. Quiet and nice-mannered, not one of those dreadfully noisy creatures you see so many of nowadays. If we had had a daughter like that now—but no doubt if we had had a daughter we should have had no more satisfaction out of her than we have out of that precious son of yours,' said Sir Francis, waxing bitter over the imaginary daughter's deficiencies.

'Wilfred may marry,' began Lady Ayrton, 'some one whom you would really like, and——'

'I pity his wife,' said Sir Francis. 'I may be a selfish valetudinarian myself—I'm not going to defend myself—but upon my soul, Sophia, my wife is not to be pitied in comparison with Wilfred's, should she ever come to exist. At his age I had some generosity, some chivalry, some ambition—but Wilfred——' and the invalid gave a gesture of disgust.

Lady Ayrton looked distressed.

'I think you are hard upon him,' she said timidly. 'All young men——'

'Don't talk twaddle, Sophia,' interrupted Sir Francis, testily. 'You know in your heart that what I say is true. You've got some scheme in your head, I suppose—some plan for marrying your precious son and reforming him——'

'My dear Sir Francis, I do beg you not to use such strong expressions,' said Lady Ayrton, more resolutely than she had yet spoken. 'Any one overhearing you would think Wilfred was a perfect reprobate.'

'And they wouldn't be far wrong,' said her husband. 'Nevertheless, I'm not publishing my opinion to the world. There is no

one to overhear what I say. And I have no wish to interfere with your plans—if you can get him married to any decent girl, I am sure I shall have no objection. It would be a great relief not to have him always loafing about us.’

‘And not five minutes ago you were complaining that he never comes near you,’ said Lady Ayrton, with some spirit. ‘Really, Sir Francis——’

‘Tut, tut, my dear, I’m not going to defend myself. Drop the subject, for Heaven’s sake; we always quarrel when we talk about Wilfred—and no wonder. There is certainly nothing very agreeable to be said about him.’

The subject in question was not fated to be so easily dropped; for at that moment Mr. Wilfred Ayrton in person entered the room.

‘Good morning, sir. How’re you getting on to-day?’ And then without waiting for an answer, ‘It’s confoundedly hot—can’t we get away from this beastly hole, mother? There’s not a breath of air in the place.’

Sir Francis looked at him without speaking; then he turned to his wife.

‘Will you be so good as to give me my book?’ he said to her coldly but civilly. It was one of his peculiarities always to speak civilly to his wife in his son’s presence.

Lady Ayrton handed him the book; then got up and crossed the room to the further window—the letter which had drawn forth the discussion with her husband still in her hand. Mr. Ayrton followed her.

‘What’s the matter with him, to-day?’ he said in a whisper, though not so low but that, had he been particularly anxious to do so, Sir Francis might have heard his words. ‘Not much inducement for a fellow to try to please a surly old——’

‘Wilfred,’ said his mother, with a warning glance.

‘Well, I want to talk to you, mother. Will you come out? The band’s playing, and those girls that arrived last night are sure to be at it. I want to see them—I rather fancy they’re good fun. I only came in because you’re always bullying me about being civil to the gov’nor, and I didn’t exactly want to get further into his black books at present.’

Lady Ayrton sighed.

‘Is it about money again, Wilfred?’ she asked.

‘I don’t see what else it’s likely to be about,’ was the gruff reply. ‘I’m not going to stand this doling out money to me when I know that there’s plenty. I’m five-and-twenty—it must all



come to me sooner or later, and it's downright absurd that I should be kept as short as a schoolboy.'

Lady Ayrton did not answer. She glanced at Sir Francis—he seemed to be falling asleep.

'We can talk better outside,' she said. 'I will go with you to the band. Wait for me at the door of the hotel. Your father is asleep, I think.'

Five minutes later the mother and son were on their way to the 'Place,' where at a certain time of the day in fine weather many of the visitors assemble. Mr. Ayrton had not apparently recovered his good temper. His face, at the best of times heavy and stolid in expression, looked sulky and forbidding, his short thick-set figure was not rendered more graceful by a certain lifting of the shoulders peculiar to him when displeased; Lady Ayrton, whose proportions were far from sylph-like, whose fat fair face could scarcely be called interesting, seemed attractive and agreeable in the extreme when compared with her unlovely son. She had in her time been a pretty girl, a more genial and active life might have left her still a pretty woman; Sir Francis on his side had been remarkably handsome, and intellectually speaking a man of parts; why Wilfred should be what he was, was a problem over which his father sneered in his cynical moods, and groaned at those times when physical suffering left not even strength to be cynical.

The pair walked on for some little way in silence. Suddenly Mr. Ayrton gave an exclamation.

'There they are! Look, mother—those people on the other side. The one in that green and gold dress is the best-looking, and the jolliest too, I fancy.'

Lady Ayrton raised her eyeglass and looked languidly across the street.

'Americans I should say,' she replied; 'I never can admire Americans, Wilfred. They may be handsome, but they are such very bad style.'

Wilfred's face grew sulky again.

'Sure not to admire anything that takes my fancy,' he muttered. Aloud he said, 'What sort of girl *do* you admire? There's not a decent-looking one here that I've seen.'

'No,' agreed his mother, 'I haven't seen many this year. Perhaps we shall be more fortunate in Paris, Wilfred. I hope to meet some old friends there. I have had letters to-day.'

Wilfred did not seem particularly interested.

'If it's anything to hasten our leaving this place I shall thank my stars,' he said. 'I couldn't have stood it till now if I hadn't been hard up.'

'How are you hard up?' asked his mother. 'Your allowance is a magnificent one, Wilfred—for a man alone I don't see that you could wish for more.'

Mr. Ayrton grunted. The best part of him came out when he got his long-suffering mother to himself. At least he was sure of being listened to and not sneered at with a caustic bitterness which he felt though he scarcely understood the keenness of its edge.

'I daresay you're right,' he said, speaking, for him, gently. 'But I do wish for more all the same. I've no one to care what I do or how I live when I'm not with you, and I can't stand my father for long. And so I get into all sorts of things—things it's no use telling you about—and then my money goes. I wish you'd made a soldier of me, or a sailor, or a backwoodsman, mother. I'd maybe have been good for something.'

'You might have been in the army—your father had no objection—if you would have worked,' said his mother, regretfully. 'The diplomatic service was what we *wished*, you know.'

'Oh, that's rot,' said Mr. Ayrton; 'I never could have stood the work, even if I could have got into it. What's the good of being rich if one's to grind away like that?'

'I was only taking up your own words—about wishing you were good for something,' said Lady Ayrton.

'But the point to attend to at the present moment is about my getting the money I want,' said Wilfred.

'The getting it for you will fall upon me as usual, I suppose,' replied his mother, 'and I am by no means sure that I shall succeed. Your father is growing tired of it, Wilfred; and so am I. Things cannot go on like this. We must come to some sort of understanding.'

'I don't know what you mean,' said Mr. Ayrton, sulkily. 'It must be all mine some day. Other fellows would have got all they wanted long ago, considering that—that's one thing I *haven't* done, but there's no saying what I mayn't be driven to.'

'Driven to ruin yourself, you mean, Wilfred,' said his mother. 'It is no use talking to you about breaking my heart and your father's, but you cannot be completely indifferent about your own future.'

'Pon my soul, I don't know but what I am,' replied he, kicking some pebbles with his foot as he spoke.

Lady Ayrton took no notice of this ejaculation. They had reached the 'Place' by this time, but they were still at some little distance from the more crowded part where the band was playing. An empty bench under some trees was near them.

'Let us wait here a moment or two,' she said, sitting down. 'There is something I want to say to you. You can surely give me your attention for five minutes—you can find out the American beauties afterwards,' she went on bitterly, for though Mr. Ayrton had sat down beside her, she saw that his eyes were roving here, there, and everywhere, in search, doubtless, of the green-and-gold costume.

'I'm quite willing to give my attention,' he replied, arranging his silver-mounted walking-stick so as to be able comfortably to suck the great knob at the top between times as a little refreshment.

Lady Ayrton sat silent for a moment looking before her. The beautiful sunlight glimmered through the trees overhead, their leaves casting strange fantastic networks of shadow on the hot gravel beneath. The clear voices of some birds twittered cheerily close at hand, while the music of the band sounded pleasantly soft in the distance. A pretty, bright-eyed girl of seventeen or so, passing at this moment with her mother, glanced at the two on the bench, and a slight expression of surprise crossed her face.

'How can people look so gloomy when everything is so delicious?' Lady Ayrton heard her say.

The poor lady sighed, but the remark had aroused her.

'Wilfred,' she began. Mr. Ayrton left off sucking his cane for a moment, and gave a slight nod to indicate that he was not asleep.

'Fire away,' he said lazily.

'Wilfred,' she went on, 'what should you think of marrying?'

Mr. Ayrton started slightly—started and then frowned. 'Awkward rather,' he muttered to himself, but his mother did not hear the words.

'Don't see the use of it,' he said aloud.

'It would please your father, it would please *me*,' she continued, her voice trembling a very little with the last words. 'It might be the beginning of a new life for you. Your father would pay your debts again, I feel sure, if you married to his satisfaction, and you might start clear on an income more than sufficient for every comfort and luxury you could wish. And, you say you have no one to care for you, Wilfred, can you not imagine yourself caring for and being cared for by a good and sweet girl?'

Mothers are proverbially partial; Lady Ayrton had cherished

her maternal illusions with exaggerated solicitude, even while refusing to own to herself the frailty of their origin, but yet, as the words 'a good and sweet girl' crossed her lips, she hesitated and faltered. Mr. Ayrton was not looking his best at that moment. His face had darkened again, his shoulders were up above his ears—he was not an attractive object, to put it very mildly. His sullen-looking mouth was firmly shut, and he gave no signs of intending to open it.

'Wilfred,' said his mother, after a little pause.

'What is it?' he said without moving.

'You might answer me.'

'I've nothing to say. I don't want to marry, I only want to get the money I need, and to be allowed to do as I choose.'

'Well, then,' said his mother, suddenly rising to her feet and speaking with a strength and decision quite new to her in her son's experience, 'I wash my hands of you. I shall not ask nor advise your father either to increase your income or to pay your debts. I am tired out by you, Wilfred—I can do no more.'

But even while she spoke her voice broke a little—tears were not far off. Mr. Ayrton seized his advantage.

'Don't excite yourself so, mother,' he said, putting out his hand and drawing her down again on to the bench. 'You shouldn't be so vivacious just because I didn't jump up and say I'd rush off to the unknown young woman on the spot. I need to think it over, surely. In the first place, who is she? I know you've some one in your head. Sit down now and tell me all about her, and let's talk it over comfortably. Who is she? Out with it. Who is she?'

Lady Ayrton swallowed down the lump in her throat—she had lived to be thankful to Wilfred for small mercies. She cleared her voice before she replied.

'You scarcely know her—the—the girl I should like you to marry. But you have seen her and you have seen her people. My very old and dearest friend is her mother. I mean Lady Christina Verney. The girl I am thinking of is her daughter Aveline.'

Mr. Ayrton gave a low whistle. 'That girl,' he ejaculated; '*she's* got no tin.'

Lady Ayrton repressed a slight gesture of disgust. 'Oh, Wilfred,' she said, 'is there nothing better than that in you—nothing of what I hoped for when you were a little innocent baby? Do you not care for anything except money?'

'It isn't money I care for—it's what it does. There's no getting on without it. And I don't see that it would mend matters for me to burden myself with a wife and family,' he replied, half sulkily and half with a clumsy attempt at jocularly.

'You said something about having no one but me to care for you. Would you not like to have a wife who would care for you? And if you married to please him, I—I scarcely like to say so much—but I think your father would do a great deal. He might even give you the Garthdean property at once, and you know that brings in an income even you could not grumble at.'

Wilfred's small eyes sparkled.

'Garthdean,' he repeated, whistling again; 'Garthdean! Do you really mean what you say, my lady?' his way of addressing his mother when in rare and high good-humour. 'Yes, that is worth thinking about, and no mistake. But why have you both taken such a fancy to this girl? I don't remember much about her. She's tall and fair-haired and very quiet—not much go in her. Isn't that the girl?'

'She is an exceedingly good girl, very well brought up, and one that both your father and I could love as a daughter,' replied Lady Ayrton. 'And the Verneys are poor—very poor—for their position; and, with their large family, they would be glad to have Aveline well settled, and—I think she is the sort of girl to appreciate being chosen for herself.'

'You mean that she'd think me disinterested, and all that sort of thing, if I chose her, when of course, if that Garthdean business is settled as you say, I could do so much better,' said Wilfred, coarsely.

His mother looked at him with again that painful sensation of disgust.

'You could *not* do better, even according to your own very practical way of putting it,' she said coldly. 'The Garthdean business, as you call it, will certainly depend on your readiness to please us in this matter of your marriage.'

Wilfred looked sulky again.

'I call that rather hard lines on a fellow,' he said. But as his mother made no answer, he added after a moment or two—'I'll think about it. I daresay she's not a bad sort of a girl.' Inwardly he said to himself, 'She's a stupid, sleepy creature, I fancy. If she had a pretty house, and some old women and school children to look after, I daresay she wouldn't interfere.—I'll think it over,' he repeated aloud.

'You will do well,' said his mother. Then she stood up and proposed to walk to that side of the 'Place' whence the view is so beautiful and far-reaching. Wilfred for his part would have preferred mingling with the crowd, and passing the green-and-gold costume, but he thought it wiser to be conciliatory at the present juncture. And Lady Ayrton seemed ready to be more insistent than usual.

'If this *is* to be the turn with him,' she thought, with again a faint flutter of hope of better things in her faithful mother's heart, 'I must keep him about me as much as I can. I should like people to notice it.'

And she exerted herself to be lively and entertaining, smiling and even laughing a little when they met some of their acquaintance, so that more than one of the English visitors remarked it, and said to themselves that it could not be true that Mr. Ayrton was so disreputable, his mother and he looked so happy together!

But no one heard the deep sigh that she gave as she stood at last, with her gentle tired face turned to the sky, against which the great snow-covered heights of the Pyrenees shone out in pure, lonely majesty.

'Am I doing wrong?' she thought. 'It is so difficult to know. Heaven and pure disinterested goodness seem *so* far away, and life is so perplexing. Why was he not a girl? I might have succeeded better.'

She glanced at her son as these thoughts passed through her mind. He was not even pretending to look at the magnificent panorama before him—his heavy-featured face, redder from the sunshine and the heat, was smiling half sulkily at the antics of some little dogs growling and snarling a few paces off, as he stood there, stolid, thick-set, and self-satisfied—of the earth, alas, and very earthy.

'I will go home now,' said Lady Ayrton, with a slight shiver, hot though it was. 'Come with me to the beginning of our street, Wilfred, and then you can return here, if you like.'

Her spirits rose a little when she found herself alone again. After all, she had not altogether failed in her first attempt—she could write a cheerful and encouraging letter to 'Christina' about their 'plans.'

'Dear Christina,' thought the poor woman to herself, 'how I wish she were here! No one can ever understand me and all my troubles as well as she does—ah, dear, she thinks want of



money the worst trouble, but I can't agree with her when I think of her children—those sweet girls, and her fine, intelligent, manly boys.'

A long letter was despatched to London in answer to the one we have followed thence to its destination—a letter which Lady Ayrton greatly enjoyed writing, and which caused a smile of pleasant expectation to light up the face of Aveline's mother when she had read it.

'Nothing could promise better,' she said to herself. 'I felt sure Sir Francis would act liberally if the idea were really suggested. And, indeed, what could they wish for more? They don't need money—and one of *my* daughters as his wife will be the very making of the young man. If I could but put a *little* more worldly wisdom, a little more practical common sense into Aveline—but it will come—doubtless it will come.'

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### CHAPTER III.

MADAME DE BONCEUR 'received' on Sunday evenings. She begged her friends to come early: she was, so she said, 'old-fashioned' in her ideas and past the age to remodel them. She was, in point of fact, a good deal older than she looked—old enough to be proud of the distinction of years, to be more inclined to add one on than to take one off, and to enjoy the look of incredulity with which strangers, especially if they were foreigners, received her announcement of the sixty-nine 'winters' she had seen.

'Yes,' she would say, 'I have lived through many changes, outlived many good and some bad things, but the world has not grown cold to me yet. I speak of my "winters" because the association better suits my white hair and my withered skin, not because I find the world wintry. Surely not; on the contrary, I am in no hurry to leave it, though that must be as the good God wills, of course. I live again in my children and my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren, the little dears. Yes, Jeanne has two boys, and her brother Séverin's wife had her first child, a magnificent little girl, last month. My daughter's daughter is not yet married, a trifle difficult to please perhaps; but it will come all in good time; and, indeed, I scarcely know what I shall do without her when that day *does* come, my good

little Modeste! But we parents must not be selfish: a bad thing to delay marriage too long, as I always remind my daughter de Villers. And Modeste is reasonable, in no way fantastic; it will be all right.'

So the old lady would chatter on, though even to her most intimate friends never too long or too exclusively on her own affairs, her bright eyes and pretty gestures enhancing the charm of her conversation, so that after a first interview every one went away delighted, sure to remark to the first common acquaintance, 'how lovely Madame de Boncœur must have been in her youth!' The delight remained, and usually deepened into hearty liking and esteem, but the faith in her bygone beauty had to be abandoned. It was well known that as a young and even middle-aged woman the Baronne had been rather remarkably plain; as is the case in certain landscapes, the partial decay of late autumn had brought with it to her a beauty unknown to her summer or spring.

Her daughter, Madame de Villers, had been, and at forty-two still was, much handsomer than Madame de Boncœur at her best. But, though handsome and amiable with the amiability of a somewhat self-concentrated and lethargic nature, she was without the elder lady's 'charm,' and, besides this, incontestably less intelligent. Modeste de Villers was as handsome as her mother, as bright and sympathetic as her grandmother, bidding fair, when time and experience should have matured her faculties, to be as intelligent and cultivated. Already she had profited much by constant intercourse with Madame de Boncœur, with whom, since the death of Monsieur de Villers, she and her mother had almost entirely lived.

It was a pleasant house to visit at—a convenient lounge of a Sunday evening for those who only cared to pass the time agreeably, a centre of lively talk and varied opinions for the more active-minded. For Madame de Boncœur, 'old-fashioned' though she liked to call herself, was not so in the narrow sense of the expression. Or rather, perhaps it would be more correct to say, her 'old fashions,' the social opinions and creeds of the France of her day, were less narrow in some notable respects than those of more modern French society.

To give but one instance in point. She had no prejudice or prepossessions against foreigners, for in her youth the salons of Paris received and welcomed many of the most 'irreproachable' families of the European upper classes. Foreign travel was not

then a mere question of money, open to the all and sundry who can afford it. The rush of tourists, who, having spent six weeks in Switzerland, steamed down the Rhine, and visited the Sainte Chapelle guide-book in hand, think they have seen 'the Continent,' was yet to come. And, still more important from the social point of view, there were in those days English and other foreign families making their homes in Paris and other continental towns for longer or shorter periods, whose reasons for thus pitching their tents in strange lands would bear inquiring into, without risk of some tragic or piteous or, still worse, scandalous revelation resulting therefrom.

So Madame de Boncœur enjoyed the entertaining of strangers, and as her relations with English society dated back some one or two generations, so far nothing had shocked her delicate perceptions, or startled her into resolving that she must close her doors to her neighbours from across the Channel.

Her salon was rather unusually crowded this Sunday evening on which we first visit it. The Paris season—earlier a few years ago than now—was at its height, and on this particular Sunday the sudden collapse of one or two expected entertainments had left a good many people at a loss what to do with themselves.

The buzz of talk was becoming bewildering, a few guests were beginning to think of withdrawing, when the double doors again flew open to admit a tall young man, who at once made his way across the two rooms to the white-haired hostess. For a minute or two, busy talking to those near her, she did not see him. He stood waiting quietly, with a simple ease of bearing devoid of the slight awkwardness an Englishman usually feels and shows in such circumstances. Yet he *was* English—a glance at his figure, an instant's gleam from his pleasant blue eyes, told the story, though his hair and complexion were dark enough to perplex those French critics who can only think of us as sandy or flaxen. And something too in his manner, a ready grace, a touch of respectful deference, as he gently took and bowed over the little thin old hand at last held out to him by Madame de Boncœur, was scarcely 'English.'

'Welcome at last, dear sir,' said the old lady, cordially. 'But you are very late! I hear—I am sorry to hear—that the serious illness of the old duke has stopped my cousin's ball this evening—so you mean to make up for your tardiness by staying later than you sometimes do, I hope.'

'I confess that idea had suggested itself to me, dear madame,'

he replied, with a smile, in fluent and *almost* accentless French. 'I should have come earlier had I been going on to the ball. As it was, I waited to finish some letters, counting on your well-known indulgence.'

'Better late than never in your case assuredly,' she answered. 'I particularly wished to see you. I have some news which will interest you I think. Wait till the rooms are cleared a little, and then we can have our chat. There is my daughter, and Modeste. They will be as charmed as ever to see you.'

And with a little wave of her hand the old lady sent him off to the other room, where Madame de Villers and her daughter were standing near the piano.

By these ladies too, Mr. Hereward, for such was the name of the young man, was cordially greeted, Madame de Villers extending three fingers, and her daughter bowing with a pleasant smile.

'You have a very crowded reception this evening,' he said to the elder lady.

'Yes,' she replied, 'there is nothing else to do, I suppose—two dances have fallen through, you know.'

'I know of one having done so,' Mr. Hereward said, 'but I hardly think that would make much difference to your salon, except that it may have allowed people to stay a little later—every one likes so much to come here.'

'And my mother likes to have them,' Madame de Villers replied. 'The more crowded her rooms are, the better spirits she is in. I don't care so much for the world, I don't like the trouble of it. But I foresee that Modeste will be her grandmother over again. She takes so much interest in everything—she even says sometimes she would like to travel—to foreign countries, I mean,' and Madame de Villers opened her sleepy eyes to express her astonishment. 'I confess I don't understand *that*. We are fortunate in making pleasant foreign acquaintances without leaving our own country.'

Mr. Hereward bowed in acknowledgment of the implied compliment.

'Modeste,' continued her mother, 'is looking forward eagerly to making acquaintance with the daughters of an old friend of ours who is coming to Paris soon. Madame, or rather I suppose I should say, Miladi Christine Verney. I do not understand your English titles. Her husband, it appears, is only plain 'monsieur.' Do you know them?'

Mr. Hereward had not been listening very attentively. Madame de Villers' voice was slightly monotonous, and it was in general quite easy to go on thinking of other things, while nominally, so to speak, engaged in conversation with her. His eyes had been wandering about, and just as she left off talking they had been caught by something in the figure and pose of a tall girl at the other end of the room, which reminded him of some one else.

'If the hair were several shades fairer,' he was saying to himself. 'The colour of the hair makes a great difference—the way it is done, and the shape of the head are very like. I wish she would turn this way. No, better not perhaps, it would destroy the illusion.'

He started as Madame de Villers touched him on the arm with her fan.

'What are you thinking of, my dear sir?' she said, smiling. 'Twice I have asked you if you know this English family—these old friends of ours, and you don't seem to hear.'

Mr. Hereward coloured to the roots of his hair.

'I beg your pardon—ten thousand pardons,' he said. 'I am frightfully ashamed of myself. I did not catch the name you mentioned. Will you say it again?'

It was true that Madame de Villers' French pronunciation of the name had prevented its attracting the young man's attention. Even now she had to repeat it more than once before his slightly bewildered ears took it in. Then suddenly his whole face lighted up.

'Verney, did you say, madame?' he repeated. 'Lady Christina Verney? Know them?—of course I know them very well indeed. Are they coming to Paris did you say? I had not heard of it.'

'I wonder you did not know. You in your official position should hear of such things sooner than any one, for this gentleman, it appears, is coming over—sent by your Government, I suppose—on some mission, I don't know what. Some financial matter between the two countries.'

Mr. Hereward's face cleared still further.

'Ah,' he said, 'I understand. I knew some one was coming over, but I did not know Mr. Verney had been fixed upon. A very good choice, too. They will probably be here some time, then.'

'Some months,' said Modeste de Villers, who, though she had been standing near, had not yet spoken. 'I am so pleased, for I

am sure these young ladies must be charming. Bonne maman says she is sure they are very well brought up.'

Mr. Hereward smiled. It was not often he had heard *Mademoiselle de Villers* say so much, for the typical French girl has far less to say for herself than our English maidens. Modeste spoke with a rather prim childishness, and yet quiet self-confidence, quite indescribable to those who do not know it. But it was quaint and pretty, especially as the girl herself was decidedly pretty, and had a soft and musical voice.

The young Englishman's smile somewhat disconcerted her. She blushed slightly, and a slight look of misgiving crossed her face.

'You smile, monsieur,' she said. 'Was it at anything I said?'

'Not at all,' said Mr. Hereward, hastily, a little ashamed of himself. *Madame de Villers*, by this time fatigued by her unusual energy, had sunk into an arm-chair, from whence she could scarcely, through the music, hear what her daughter was saying. 'That is to say, there was nothing to cause a smile in what you said, *mademoiselle*. I smiled from several causes, but all pleasant ones. Among others I was picturing you and Miss Verney together. You would make a charming picture.'

'How? Is she at all like me?' asked Modeste, with quiet girlish curiosity which made her manner more natural.

'No, she is quite different. There would be the charm of contrast. She is exceedingly fair—fair even for an English girl. Her sister, on the contrary, is as dark as you, *mademoiselle*.'

'Her sister—how old is she? Are there two grown-up daughters?' asked Modeste.

'No, only one. The second one, *Leonora*, is quite young—fifteen, sixteen—I don't know exactly. And there are several still younger boys and girls of all ages. But I do not know much of any of them, except——' Mr. Hereward hesitated, 'except of *Lady Christina*, and—I used to meet Miss Verney, of course, at dances and evening parties.'

*Mademoiselle de Villers* looked up at Mr. Hereward with a peculiar expression in her brown eyes. It was not often that she talked so much to a young man—but this was an Englishman; that made all the difference. She had heard a good deal from her grandmother about English manners and customs, for *Madame de Boncœur* considered herself a great authority on the subject, and something in Mr. Hereward's tone had suggested a vague



suspicion that here might be one of the curious instances of young people in England managing their own affairs, of which hints had reached her. Modeste felt suddenly venturesome.

'Is Miss Verney pretty?' she asked abruptly, still keeping her eyes fixed on the young diplomatist.

'Pretty,' he repeated; 'no, mademoiselle, she is not pretty. I should rather say she was beautiful.'

'Ah!' said Modeste, with a half audible sigh of satisfaction. Her instinct had been right. There was a flush of unusual colour on the girl's pale face as she turned away.

'I should like to marry some one who would speak of *me* in that tone,' she thought. 'Monsieur Tercy St.-Ange would never have done so, I am sure.—Yes, *bonne maman*, I am coming,' for her grandmother's voice summoning her to her side sounded across the room.

An hour later the salons were all but deserted.

'I shall hope to call on Friday' (which was Madame de Boncœur's afternoon at home), said Mr. Hereward, as he approached his hostess to say good-night, 'and then, if you are less engaged, perhaps you will tell me about our friends' coming. It is too late to-night—you, madame, must be tired.'

'Not so tired as all that,' said the bright old lady, motioning the young man to a chair by her side. 'Stay five minutes. What was it I wanted to say? Oh, yes. This good Christine has written to ask me to help her to find a house. But I am putting the cart before the horse, surely. Had I told you the news that my friends—and your friends also, the Verney family—are coming to Paris?'

'You yourself had not told me, but I have just heard it from Madame de Villers,' he replied.

'Ah, that is all right then. My old head is not as clear as it used to be. Miladi sends messages of remembrance to you in case I should see you. But I am quite embarrassed about this question of a house. She says "house," but she must mean an *appartement*, not a *hôtel*. It is several years since she was in Paris—perhaps she forgets?'

'She must certainly mean an *appartement*,' answered Mr. Hereward, with decision. 'The Verneys are far from rich—they could not afford a *hôtel*. And furnished *hôtels* are not easy to find—as you know. Shall I look about a little—I had to do so for my sister last year—and report to you what I see? We are not very busy just now.'

He spoke with an evident eagerness which did not escape the quick-sighted old lady.

'It is most amiable of you,' she replied. 'And you will probably know better than I, both what they want and what they can afford to give. I know all about English tastes and ways, of course—but you, having seen them all more recently, may be better acquainted with their particular likes and dislikes. Then shall we leave it so? You will look about as you did for madame your sister, and you will report to me? And of course, if necessary, I or my daughter could go and see any *appartement*. Yes—it is an excellent idea.'

There was an unmistakable tone of relief in the old lady's voice which caused Mr. Hereward an invisible smile. He would have liked to lead her on to speak more of the Verneys, but he judged it wiser not to do so.

There will be plenty of opportunity for my hearing all she has to tell,' he reflected, and for the moment he looked about for some other subject of conversation.

'I did not see St.-Ange this evening,' he said suddenly. 'He has been here so regularly of late that one misses him.'

'Yes,' said Madame de Boncœur, composedly, 'we have seen a good deal of him this year. He is an excellent young man. He will be here again next week, I dare say.' She looked up at Mr. Hereward quickly as she spoke. Something in his expression decided her to say more.

'You have heard a rumour perhaps that he—that something has been in question with regard to this gentleman and my little Modeste,' she said.

Mr. Hereward felt and looked slightly awkward. He had heard the rumour—had been indeed assured that it was more than a rumour. Madame de Boncœur smiled at his embarrassment.

'Do not look so unhappy about it,' she said. 'You English do amuse me sometimes. It is the simplest thing in the world. I was only going to ask you, as you know several of Monsieur St.-Ange's friends, to contradict it. It is always best to have no misunderstandings about such things.'

'Then it is certainly not to be?' asked Mr. Hereward.

'Not to be,' said the old lady. 'He is excellent, as I said, and for many reasons we should have liked it. But they have seen enough of each other now to judge, and Modeste does not care for him.'

'And he?'

'He has never been sure enough of her to allow himself to get exceedingly attached to her. He would never care for any girl who did not really care for him. Perhaps it is that very want of fervour about him which has lost his chance. However, there is no harm done—far better than your English way of rushing into a thing without reflection, and discovering the want of congeniality afterwards.'

'But, madame,' began the young man, eagerly, 'I assure you——'

'Ah, yes—ah, yes—I know what you would assure me! I have heard it all so often. That there are so many happy marriages in England, &c., &c. Well, so there are in France! Mind, I speak of the present day. I am not so wedded to the past as to defend the old system, which you English still believe in as devoutly as many French believe that you all still dine like Germans at one o'clock, and that nothing is to be seen on your tables but half raw roast beef!'

'I have not found the French so ignorant,' said Mr. Hereward, with a smile.

'Perhaps not, because you have known principally those of Paris, the most cosmopolitan capital in the world; still more, your acquaintances are not only of the quite upper classes, but many of them people of the day—who *cannot* be so ignorant. But wait till you know some of our regular old country families—people who never leave their châteaux. Then talk of ignorance

'It is much the same in all countries, I suppose,' he replied. 'It is astounding how little we know of each other when one considers what a mere strip of water separates us physically. And though we English travel so much more, I doubt if we know much more of the *people* of other nations, speaking generally, than they know of us. We see the places, but that tells nothing of the home life.'

'You know *less* of us in that sense than we know of you,' said Madame de Boncœur, decidedly. 'Your novels, even though so seldom to be compared with ours as works of art, can be and are far more widely read by foreigners than ours, and their constant theme is English home-life. Then, too, you are so much more quickly hospitable than we. Such of us as do go to England are at once admitted into the real family life, whereas it is not one foreigner in a hundred, nay in a thousand, that really sees our inner circles.'

'You have thought a great deal about it,' said Mr. Hereward, admiringly.

Nigel Hereward's head was rather in a whirl as he made his way home. 'I have no reason to suppose it will hurt any one but myself, he reflected, 'and that's my own affair. I may go on scorching my wings if I like. Were it otherwise,' he hesitated, 'in that case I'd try to get away from Paris before they come. I'd do anything rather than risk suffering for *her*. But her mother is a sensible woman, and she has never seemed to mind throwing us together; she must know her own child, and, of course, she knows I can't dream of marrying for years and years, if, indeed, ever. No, I don't see but that I may make myself miserable with a clear conscience—it's no one else's business. Dear me, how little I imagined when I went to Madame de Boncœur's to-night what I was going to hear.'

He stood still on the bridge—he was just then crossing the river from the old street where he had spent the evening on his way to the Champs Elysées quarter where he lived. The stars in the cloudless sky overhead were reflected in the clear dark water below, the fresh night air seemed unusually reviving and inspiring, everything spoke to him of hope and happy augury. It is so easy at five-and-twenty to think that one's wildest dreams may be realised.

'Who knows,' thought Nigel to himself, as he at last walked on, 'who knows what may turn up? My great-uncle Fortescue may leave me a legacy after all, or Roderick's babies may all die of the croup—nay, what a shame of me to think of such a thing even in joke!'

And with a laugh he stepped on lightly

There was a letter on his table when he let himself in—a letter from his step-sister. He ran through it hastily; it contained nothing of much interest. But as a postscript she had added, 'I hear Sir Francis and Lady Ayrton and their son are going to stay in Paris on their way home. Be civil to them, as they are neighbours of ours.'

'That little beast!' ejaculated Nigel. 'I wonder if he's improved since the licking Seaforth and I gave him at school as a finish up. If not—I certainly pity his belongings.'

(*To be continued.*)

## *At the Sign of the Ship.*

IS there, or was there ever, any such thing as genius? This question has provoked a comfortable little discussion among American men of letters. Mr. W. D. Howells appears to think that there is no such thing as genius, or at least that there is none at present. Mr. Artemus Ward himself once remarked that nobody was going around wearing the mantle of Shakespeare 'to any extent,' and, so far, we may perhaps all agree with him and Mr. Howells. But on the general topic, as to the existence of genius (literary genius especially), there is room for doubt. Mr. E. C. Stedman, the American critic, does believe in the existence of genius. In the *New Princetown Review* he argues against a doctrine which Mr. Howells seems to think grateful and comforting. As far as I understand the controversy, I am on the side of Mr. Stedman. Mr. Howells' doctrine appears to be that what we commonly call genius (as in the case of Thackeray, Coleridge, and so forth—the examples are my own) is merely a higher degree of industrious intelligence, such as we admire in various men of letters. Perhaps this may be an impregnable position, but it defends too wide a space of ground. Perhaps mind may be only a higher degree of matter, and perhaps matter may be only a more concrete form of mind. Both views have been argued, with much comfort, by philosophers. But ordinary men do make a distinction of kind between mind and matter, between life and death, and even between genius and intelligent application.

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Old philosophers recognised the distinction. We are familiar with Plato's theory of 'a divine madness' or inspiration. This was but another word for that surprising power of rising above everything familiar and expected into the realm of new creations, which we call genius in literature. Thackeray felt it when he astonished himself by the scene between Becky, Rawdon, and

Lord Steyne, in Curzon Street. Wordsworth showed the same inspiration (probably without astonishing himself in the least) in the moments 'when Nature seems to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him.' Genius, in Wordsworth's case, was emphatically a wind that bloweth where it listeth. It is easy to discriminate the inspired passages of *Tintern Abbey* from the passages which are mere flat moralising of William Wordsworth, deeply and undesirably self-conscious of his own peculiar moral merits as a lover of Nature. But all these examples of genius, and any others that might be given, are not, after all, arguments. They are only statements of personal impressions. What are we to say to a disputant who sees nothing in the Becky scene that any ordinary novelist might not have written, or who thinks that *Tintern Abbey* is all on one level of excellence? There is really no standard but 'as the man of taste may determine,' and how are we to take a *plébiscite* of men of taste? One may have an impression that, on this topic, they agree with Mr. Stedman, and think the opinions of Mr. Howells an interesting paradox. But we cannot decide the cause, and can only console ourselves with the old comfortable saw, *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*.

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Dr. Johnson, the old dictator, is probably at the bottom of this heresy about genius and its non-existence. A sentence in his *Life of Abraham Cowley* is the text of such discourses. 'The true genius,' said Johnson, 'is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction.' On this showing, Thackeray might have become a Napoleon or Warren Hastings, if he had gone to Haileybury and not to Charterhouse, or Lord Randolph Churchill might have been a lyric poet, if his general powers had been accidentally determined 'to that particular direction.' But Johnson himself, in this very *Life of Cowley*, seems to be far from intending his maxim to mean all that it seems to imply. 'Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost,'—the result may be 'ingenious absurdity.'

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It would be, indeed, a melancholy and futile thing to persuade mankind that by dint of industry they can make themselves the equals of the great, inspired by 'a certain madness from the gods.'



Possibly we have not in this generation, in literature, examples of genius so brilliant as to make sceptics believe that it actually exists. Yet methinks there are sparks of it in a writer or two, still on the side of youth, and we should not weary of expecting more tokens that genius has not deserted the world. To acquiesce, still more to rejoice, in this literary pessimism, to long for literary equality, is to act as Johnson thinks Milton might have done. Like a poet, Milton seems to have thought that poetry was a child of the Sun-god, and that it was a drawback to have been born in the frosty North. But he should not have regretted it, says Johnson; he should have been content with eminence 'among this lagging race of frosty grovellers.' Perhaps we, too, are 'a lagging race of frosty grovellers,' but that would be nothing to rejoice over. Perhaps Johnson gave his own measure as a judge of genius, when he said, of *Lycidas*, 'In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral—easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting.' How could a man speak, with authority, on genius in literature who declared and believed that Milton's sonnets 'deserve no particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation'? There must have been, when the great and well-beloved doctor wrote this, a good deal of 'frosty grovelling.'

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It is not uncomplimentary to the Celtic spirit, I hope, to say that the Celtic spirit is a little impracticable. 'They don't know what they want, and they won't be satisfied till they get it,' said an Irish orator of his own countrymen. This is the aspiring temper, incapable of yielding to circumstances, which Mr. Matthew Arnold calls 'Titanic' when it exhibits itself in literature. The ancient Celts had a law, it appears, which punished a man who, when arrayed in line of battle, 'stuck out too much in front.' This contempt of circumstances, which made the Celts of old decline to be frightened even by earthquakes, displays itself in the whole Celtic land difficulty. Land cultivated in a certain fashion, that is in small lots, does not pay in some places. A Teuton would therefore give up his farm. But the Celt won't; he just stops there.

A few weeks ago I had the chance to see a very wretched sight,

a Highland eviction, which illustrated these Titanic Celtic qualities.

It was a very wet afternoon, and I was walking along Strathwhacket (let us call it), in conversation with a charming old Highlander. He carried my rod and creel (empty), but his conversation was as good as any one is likely to find anywhere. He spoke of Montrose's wars, and was not on the side of the Argyles. He spoke of the *Taishtaragh* (I think he called it) or second sight. 'Every man sees three sights in his lifetime they say,' he remarked, and confessed that he had not even seen one 'sight' yet. 'But there is a man at Fort William who sees everything that is going to happen.' I suggested that this gentleman might make a rapid fortune if he would turn his inspired gaze on the British Turf, but at that moment we noticed a great brown smoke hanging in the wet air. It was an eviction. The 'sight' was not of the supernatural kind which the gillie spoke of, but it was fit to make a mark on the memory. Beyond the river there was a high, wooded hill, all blue in the rain. Against this the smoke arose white, and in the midst of the clear red flame the black gables of the burning cottage stood out clear. There were some sappy, green bunches of trees by the gable; on the grass near the roadside a woman was trying to cover her property—chairs, table, an old delf dinner service, all very decent furniture. The old gillie was very much excited, and full of anger and pity. 'The pony saw it,' he said, 'this is what the pony saw.' He referred to a misdemeanour of our pony, which had shied violently as we drove down the road in the morning. To me it seemed that the horse was alarmed by a big sheep which had bounced up under its nose, but my friend credited the pony with the *Taishtaragh*. 'The beasts see things we can't see,' he told me. This gift is very interesting, but it would not comfort me to have my neck broken by a prophetic quadruped, because a farmer I did not know was going to be evicted. The case of the farmer, if it was correctly reported, seemed to illustrate the Titanic Celtic temper very well. He had not paid a penny of rent for four years. The rent may have been high, but he surely might have paid some of it. Yet, though he had economised in rent, he was unable to pay his other creditors, and his stock and cattle had been sold up.

An Englishman would have perhaps thought it well to leave a farm which he could not make profitable, when he had money and stock. But the Celtic tenant simply declined to leave, in spite of many requests and warnings. The burning of his house,

it was said, was an example of *trop de zèle* on the part of the Messenger at Arms, who exceeded his instructions. It was certainly a miserable and ill-advised action. But, as we slowly climbed the hill, and saw the smoke clinging to the valley, and saw the blackened beams of an old family home, we seemed to discern the differences between our race and the Celtic peoples. We have lost the old poetical beliefs, the *Taishtaragh* and the rest of it. No English beater nor under-keeper (except Kingsley's poet of gamekeeping life) could have talked as that old gillie talked, an unschooled man, to whom English was a foreign tongue, half learned. History was tradition to him, a living oral legend. But we can recognise the nature and pressure of facts, without which sad knowledge society would revert into barbarism in a fortnight.

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The dying pauper in the old story was told by the Beadle that 'Heaven was not for the likes of *him*, and he ought to be very thankful to have "another place" to go to.' The following lines express a more unusual discontent of a 'porochial pauper':

#### TIRED OF TOWNS.

'When we spoke to her of the New Jerusalem, she said she would rather go to a country place in Heaven.'—*Letters from the Black Country.*

I'm weary of towns, it seems a'most a pity

We didn't stop down i' the country and clem,  
And you say that I'm bound for another city,  
For the streets o' the New Jerusalem.

And the streets are never like Sheffield, here,

Nor the smoke don't cling like a smut to *them* ;  
But the water o' life flows cool and clear  
Through the streets o' the New Jerusalem.

And the houses, you say, are of jasper cut,

And the gates are gaudy wi' gold and gem ;  
But there's times I could wish as the gates was shut—  
The gates o' the New Jerusalem.

For I come from a country that's over-built  
 Wi' streets that stifle, and walls that hem,  
 And the gorse on a common's worth all the gilt  
 And the gold of your New Jerusalem.

And I hope that they'll bring me, in Paradise,  
 To green lanes leafy wi' bough and stem—  
 To a country place in the land o' the skies,  
 And not to the New Jerusalem.

\* \* \*

The society in Bath (in Roman times) must have been as queer as in the days of Mr. Pickwick. A recent visit to Bath showed that the town was archæologically minded, and proud of possessing a Latin inscription scratched on a leaden plate. The learned read this relic of Roman Bath in three ways, all quite different, but only two of them are printed in the *Guide to the Roman Baths*. The first runs thus, and testifies to the gratitude and generosity of a visitor; also, to the absence of any circulating medium but copper:

'Quintus has bathed Vilbia for me with the water. Along with Cliquatis he has saved her for me by means of *quin . . . tael*. His pay is 500,000 pounds of copper coin or *quinari*.' Then follow names of witnesses. If we only knew what *quin . . . tael* is—can it be quinine cocktail? And what a prodigal fee! 500,000 pounds of coppers! Appius Claudius only offered 'ten thousand pounds in copper' (not in *coppers*) 'to the man that wrings his head!' But it was in actual coppers that the gentleman whose Vilbia was 'washed with the water' showed his gratitude.

The other rendering is less creditable to the manners and common honesty of society in Bath sixteen hundred years ago. 'May the man who stole my tablecloth waste away like water unless he restores it. Parties suspected are Vinna, or Exsupereus, Verianus, Severinus, Augustalis, Corintianus, Catusminianus, Germanilla, Jovina.' Apparently the owner of the tablecloth had given a little dinner, and his guest had stolen his tablecloth. Probably it was a practical joke of pretty little Jovina's.

Perhaps both translations are wrong, but both are deeply affecting in their revelations of human nature.

\* \* \*

The psychology of the Bold Bad Boy has often been attempted. In the following stanzas a young lady offers her notion of the Bold Bad Boy, who seems to combine cynicism with sentiment, and to be not unread in Bret Harte.

\* \* \*

## LEGEND OF THE CROSSING-SWEEPER.

By M. K.

The boarders look so good and new,  
A saint it would annoy.  
To squirt upon them two by two  
Would be my greatest joy.  
The boarders think—I know it's true—  
I am a wicked boy.

But one—I've never known *her* stare  
As if I were a wall  
That had no business to be there,  
Or anywhere at all.  
And once—to stop she didn't dare—  
She let a sixpence fall.

She smiled to show she couldn't wait,  
And gently said 'Good-night!'  
You bet I pulled my cap off, straight,  
I nodded all my might.  
But now she seldom comes. I hate  
To see her look so white.

There is a place—*she'll* go some day,  
Right up above the sky,  
It is uncommon bright and gay,  
Swells live there when they die  
If they are good. Some say *we* may,  
But that is all my eye.

They stand with harps and crowns in rows  
For doing all they should.  
But I should miss her, I suppose.  
I'd save her if I could—  
Only a boy that never goes  
To Sunday school 's no good.

*AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP.*

And I'm the worst boy in the town.

I lark, I fight, I swear,

I knock the other fellows down

And lick them. I don't care.

They'll give her such a harp and crown,

But I shall not be there.

Those crowns—if one could hang about

The gate till all was done.

She'll stand in a white gown, no doubt,

With gold hair like the sun.

I'd like to see them given out—

I'd never ask for one.

ANDREW LANG.

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*The 'Donna.'*

THE EDITOR begs to acknowledge the following contributions : Rev. J. G. Wood 10s. L. C. 10s. J. D. 5s. F. H. 2s. 'A Family, Adelaide, S.A.' 11. 10s.

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